

Cultural experiences of German and Chinese exchange students and implications for a target group-oriented intercultural training program

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ABSTRACT

With increasing globalization of the world, more and more German and Chinese students are studying abroad. Cross-cultural living is a life experience full of challenges. Aiming to support the process of cross-cultural adjustment of German and Chinese exchange students, this study examines cultural differences between Germany and China focusing on cognition, emotion, and communication; compares local students' views of their own behaviors (self-perception) with the exchange students' views of the host nationals' behaviors (cross-cultural perception) to map out potential misperceptions; assesses adjustment difficulties of the exchange students resulting from cultural differences; and finally, based upon a literature review and the findings of the current study, this thesis offers a conceptual framework for a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students.

The study was carried out at several Chinese and German universities. 178 local students (German students in Germany; Chinese students in China) and exchange students (German students in China; Chinese students in Germany) participated in the study. Respondents completed questionnaires asking for perceived cultural differences between Germany and China in cognition, emotion, and communication, as well as their perceived cross-cultural difficulties due to these cultural differences. In order to understand the impact of contextual factors on individuals' behavior, the study assessed behavior in specific, experimentally varied situations. For example, we varied situational importance (low/high) or group type (in-group/out-group) to assess possible differential behaviors. The local students were asked to describe their own likely behavior (self-perception), and the exchange students made predictions about the behavior of students from their host country (cross-cultural perception).

Results show that whereas some cultural differences (e.g. communication style, emotion) as reported in the literature have been confirmed by the exchange students, many other commonly held beliefs about cultural characteristics – especially about those of Chinese culture – cannot definitively be proved. This surprising result is attributed to the specific factors of the academic environment, ongoing socio-cultural change in China, the difference between “ideal culture” and “real culture”, and the domain- or context-dependency of Chinese participants' behavior.

Results clearly show that situational context has a greater impact on Chinese participants' behavior than on German participants' behavior. For example, it was found that in an unimportant situation, Chinese participants self-reported more indirect communication, which is consistent with previous findings; in an important situation, however, Chinese participants reduced their indirectness, and both Chinese and German respondents self-reported the same amount of direct communication.

The situation-dependency of Chinese behavior appears to be the main reason that many cross-cultural perceptions made by German exchange students are incoherent with the self-perception of Chinese local students. Comparatively, the Chinese cross-cultural perception of German behavior is relative correct.

One surprising result concerns the perceived cross-cultural difficulties. Both German and Chinese exchange students reported having few or even no problems with the cultural differences between Germany and China. A closer examination of the methodology of the study as well as the follow-up interviews with some of the participants suggest several possible explanations for this surprising result, including special factors of the academic environment, cultural response tendency, largely varied individual experiences, and the focus on other fundamental concerns (e.g. academic problem) in cross-cultural transitions.

The findings of the current study and a literature review of cultural standards and cross-cultural adjustment provided a basis for developing a framework for an international training program for German and Chinese exchange students. Based on a sophisticated analysis of problems and needs of the students, their strengths and weaknesses, and factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment, this thesis offers a theoretical and integrative framework for a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students.

In sum, among the existing cross-cultural research, very few studies have specifically examined the cross-cultural experiences of German and Chinese exchange students and assessed the current cultural differences between Germany and China. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, no study has provided a research-based and target group-oriented concept of intercultural training for German and Chinese exchange students. This thesis contributes to existing research by offering a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of German and Chinese culture as well as establishing an integrative framework for conceptualizing a target group-oriented intercultural training program.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mit der zunehmenden Globalisierung gehen immer mehr deutsche und chinesische Studenten zum Studieren ins Ausland. Das Leben in einer fremden Kultur ist voller Herausforderungen und erfordert interkulturelles Lernen. Mit dem Ziel das interkulturelle Lernen der deutschen und chinesischen Austauschstudenten zu unterstützen, untersuchte diese Studie die kulturellen Unterschiede zwischen Deutschland und China mit dem Fokus auf Kognition, Emotion und Kommunikation. Verglichen wurde die Selbsteinschätzung (einheimische Studenten schätzten ihre eigene Verhaltenstendenzen ein) mit der Fremdeinschätzung (Austauschstudenten schätzten die Verhaltenstendenzen der einheimischen Studenten ein), um Fehleinschätzungen zu identifizieren. Erfragt wurden zudem die kulturellen Anpassungsschwierigkeiten der Austauschstudenten in ihrem Gastgeberland. Basierend auf den Ergebnissen dieser Studie, sowie auf einem umfassenden Literaturreview, wurde ein Konzept für ein zielgruppenorientiertes Trainingsprogramm für deutsche und chinesische Austauschstudenten erstellt.

Die Studie wurde an Universitäten in Deutschland und China durchgeführt. Die Teilnehmer waren 178 einheimische Studenten (deutsche Studenten in Deutschland, chinesische Studenten in China) und Austauschstudenten (deutsche Austauschstudenten in China, chinesische Austauschstudenten in Deutschland). Die Probanden beantworteten Fragen über kulturelle Unterschiede zwischen Deutschland und China und berichteten von ihren erlebten interkulturellen Schwierigkeiten. Um die Rolle des situativen Kontexts für das Verhalten zu testen, wurden Situationen mit unterschiedlichen Ausgangspunkten als Settings vorgegeben. Es wurden zum Beispiel die Wichtigkeit (hoch/niedrig) oder die Gruppenzugehörigkeit (Ingroup/Outgroup) variiert, um deren Bedeutung für das Verhalten zu testen. Die einheimischen Studenten beschrieben, was sie selbst in einer gegebenen Situation tun würden, und die Austauschstudenten beschrieben, was ihrer Meinung nach ein Einwohner ihres Gastgeberlands tun würde.

Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass von den häufig in der Literatur zitierten kulturellen Eigenschaften von Deutschen und Chinesen nur einige von den Austauschstudenten bejaht wurden (z.B. Kommunikationsstile), während viele andere (z.B. emotionaler Ausdruck) nicht mit Sicherheit bestätigt werden konnten. Dies gilt besonders für Merkmale der chinesischen Kultur. Das überraschende Ergebnis wird auf die speziellen Gegebenheiten des akademischen Umfelds, die gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen in China, den

Unterschied zwischen „idealer“ Kultur und „realer“ Kultur, sowie die Domain- und Kontextabhängigkeit des Verhaltens der chinesischen Teilnehmer zurückgeführt.

Die Studie bekräftigte die Vermutung, dass der situative Kontext einen größeren Einfluss auf das Verhalten der Chinesen als auf das Verhalten der Deutschen hat. Zum Beispiel berichteten die chinesischen Teilnehmer in einer unwichtigen Situation viel mehr indirekte Kommunikation zu verwenden als die deutschen Teilnehmer; in einer wichtigen Situation reduzieren die chinesischen Teilnehmer ihre Indirektheit jedoch weitgehend und kommunizierten genauso direkt wie die deutschen Teilnehmer.

Die Kontextabhängigkeit der chinesischen Verhaltensweisen scheint der Hauptgrund dafür zu sein, dass es viele Widersprüche zwischen den Fremdeinschätzungen der deutschen Austauschstudenten über Chinesen und den Selbsteinschätzungen der einheimischen chinesischen Studenten gab. Die Fremdeinschätzungen der chinesischen Austauschstudenten bezüglich des deutschen Verhaltens waren vergleichsweise zutreffender.

Das Ergebnis über das geringe Ausmaß interkultureller Schwierigkeiten der Austauschstudenten war überraschend. Sowohl deutsche Austauschstudenten in China als auch chinesische Austauschstudenten in Deutschland berichteten von sehr wenigen bis hin zu gar keinen Problemen mit ihrer Gastkultur. Eine genaue Überprüfung der Methodologie der Studie, sowie die Follow-up Interviews mit den Teilnehmern ließen erkennen, dass Faktoren wie die speziellen Merkmale des akademischen Kontexts, eine kulturbedingte Antworttendenz, unterschiedliche individuelle Erlebnisse, sowie der Fokus der Austauschstudenten auf andere fundamentale Probleme (z.B. das Studium) während des Auslandsaufenthaltes verantwortlich sind für das geringe Ausmaß von interkulturellen Schwierigkeiten.

Ergebnisse dieser Studie und des Literaturreviews zu Kulturstandards und interkulturelle Kompetenz bilden die Grundlage für die Entwicklung eines Trainings für deutsche und chinesische Austauschstudenten. Die Problemlage und der Bedarf der Austauschstudenten für interkulturelles Lernen wurden ermittelt, die Stärken sowie Schwächen der Zielgruppen analysiert und die Rolle der Faktoren, die eine erfolgreiche interkulturelle Kommunikation zwischen Deutschen und Chinesen beeinflussen, unter die Lupe genommen. Basierend auf den oben genannten theoretischen Überlegungen sowie empirischen Ergebnissen, bietet

diese Arbeit ein integratives Konzept für den Design eines zielgruppenorientierten, interkulturellen Trainingprogramms für deutsche und chinesische Austauschstudenten.

Es gibt bisher in der Kulturforschung sehr wenige Studien, die speziell die interkulturellen Erlebnisse der deutschen und chinesischen Austauschstudenten untersucht haben. Außerdem hat nach meiner Kenntnisse keine Studie ein umfassendes und forschungsfundiertes Konzept für ein Trainingsprogramm für deutsche und chinesische Austauschstudenten erstellt. Diese Studie trägt zu einem umfassenden Verständnis der deutschen und chinesischen Kulturbegegnungen bei und bietet ein integratives Rahmenmodell für ein zielgruppenorientiertes, interkulturelles Training.

INTRODUCTION

Thus it is said that if you know others and yourself, you will win every battle; if you do not know others but yourself, you win one and lose one; if you do not know others and do not know yourself, you will lose in every battle (Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 540 B. C.)

Globalization of the world has led to a significant increase in the cross-cultural interactions between Germany and China. As a country well-known for its highly developed technology, Germany is one of the most attractive places to study for Chinese students; and China, with its enormous rise in economic and political power, has drawn the attention of the world. In order to get to know another culture and to prepare themselves for the future, more and more students choose to study abroad. Recent data indicates that the number of German students studying in China continues to grow, with about 1,280 in 2003 and over 2,800 in 2006. The number of Chinese students enrolled in German universities has increased from 19,734 in 2003 to 26,061 in 2006, and Chinese students make up one of the largest groups of foreign students in Germany (DAAD, China Scholarship Council). With the further development of economic, cultural, and political contacts between Germany and China, the number of exchange students will continue to increase significantly in the future as well.

During their study abroad, international students are confronted with many challenges: they are required to adjust rapidly to the new culture, fit into the new educational and social environments, establish relationships with local nationals, manage their study effectively, etc. Prior research on cross-cultural adjustment shows that international students suffer a myriad of psychological (such as depression) and social problems (such as social isolation) (e.g. Bennett, 1993; Furnham, 2004; Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Clearly, there is a compelling need to support international students coping with adjustment difficulties so that they can make a successful cross-cultural transition, fully realize the educational benefits of their sojourn experience, and promote intercultural understandings as cultural ambassadors.

One of the most effective ways to facilitate the cross-cultural transition of international students is to better prepare them for the upcoming adjustment challenges. To achieve this goal, intercultural training programs may be implemented. Intercultural training promotes intercultural learning through the acquisition of cognitive, affective and behavioral

competencies required for effective interactions across cultures (e.g. Landis & Brislin, 1996; Morris & Robie, 2001).

In looking at intercultural training programs for German and Chinese international students, it is clear that students receive limited if any training to promote their intercultural competence. Among those existing training programs, it is common to merely borrow concepts from programs for business sojourners or apply an established program to all groups of students. Such programs may have conceptual and operational limitations in terms of their influences on cross-cultural effectiveness due to the lack of a theoretical and integrative framework for a target group-oriented training. To make it worse, a considerable percentage of the knowledge conveyed about other cultures (especially about the Chinese culture) is either outdated or inaccurate, due to incomplete or stereotypical information, or due to oversimplifications of complex social practices. Considering the rapid change in Chinese society, it is not surprising that many German exchange students who travelled to China are astonished by a China that is quite different from its previous, outdated image, and consequently feel insecure in dealing with this situation. Therefore, it is imperative for an intercultural training program to provide current and accurate knowledge about the target country, to meet the unique needs of the exchange students and to examine factors influencing their cross-cultural adjustment.

In response to the research requirements mentioned above, the present study has four main aims:

The first aim is to identify cross-cultural differences between Germany and China, especially in the fields of cognition, emotion, and communication, as they are key factors in understanding cross-cultural interactions. The current study examined German and Chinese culture standards in the context of academic life of German and Chinese exchange students. Given the decisive roles which both cultural orientation (such as values) and contextual factors (such as situational demands) play in regulating individuals' behavior, the study assessed behavioral tendencies in a variety of situational scenarios in order to examine the impact of socio-cultural and contextual factors on behavior. In a word, this study conducted basic research focusing on explicating the cultural systems so as to achieve an in-depth understanding of the cross-cultural interactions between Germany and China.

The second aim is to compare local students' view of their own behavior (self-perception) with the exchange students' view of the host nationals' behavior (cross-cultural

perception). It is important to identify potential perception bias and figure out the sources of these misperceptions, since perceptions – both self-perception and the perception of one's host country – have substantial impact on the process of cross-cultural interactions involving expectations of the cross-cultural contacts, the ways of dealing with information, or the attitude toward others.

The third aim is to explore whether there are many difficulties for German exchange students in China and Chinese exchange students in Germany as a result of cultural differences in cognition, emotion, and communication; what difficulties they encounter; the nature of these difficulties; and the reason for these difficulties. In this way, the study attempts to gain insight into the unique concerns and problems of German and Chinese exchange students and discern their needs for a training program.

Finally, based on a general review of the literature and the empirical findings of the current study, this thesis aims to draw implications for the development of a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students. It attempts to provide a basis for a precise conceptualization of cross-cultural adjustment and to develop a theoretical and integrative framework for an intercultural training program for the exchange students in order to maximize the benefits of their cross-cultural transitions.

This thesis consists of five chapters. **Chapter 1** provides the theoretical background for the current study. It reports on the research regarding the conceptualization of culture, including dimensions of culture and culture standards. The main part of this chapter reviews major empirical studies regarding cultural differences between Germany and China with a focus on cognition, emotion, and communication. **Chapter 2** describes the methodology and results of the study. It reports the cultural differences perceived by German and Chinese exchange students and the adjustment difficulties they face. It also assesses the individuals' behavior in varied situational contexts in order to examine the impact of situations on people's behavior. The results of the current study highlights the fact that many commonly held beliefs or thoughts about cultural phenomena – especially those in China – are actually inaccurate or biased. The nature and source of such misperceptions are discussed, and suggestions are offered on how to better understand cultural complexity in cross-cultural interactions. After presenting the results of the current study, **Chapter 3** goes on to review literature on cross-cultural adjustment, especially with regard to major concerns of international students, predictors of adjustment, the construct of intercultural competence, and the concept of intercultural training. Finally, in **Chapter 4**,

implications are drawn from the current findings, and a framework is proposed for the design of a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students. The framework builds on problem analysis and the need analysis addressing the adjustment difficulties and concerns of the students, the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the target groups, and the analysis of factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment of German and Chinese exchange students.

1 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GERMANY AND CHINA

This chapter will review the literature concerning cultural differences between Germany and China. Given the broad differences between these two nations, a detailed discussion of all cultural differences is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the review of the literature will focus on cognition, emotion, communication, and the “Self”, because these are key factors to understanding cross-cultural interactions. Section 1.1 outlines the research on cultural dimensions and provides a description of central German and Chinese culture standards. Next, section 1.2 presents the findings of main empirical studies concerning Germany-China differences. Section 1.3 reports on the value and behavioral changes of Chinese people in the process of China’s societal modernization. Finally, section 1.4 concludes the chapter with discussions for a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural differences.

1.1 CONCEPT OF CULTURE

A wide range of definitions has been used for the term “culture”. Culture has been defined as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1871); as “patterned ways of thinking” (Kluckhohn, 1951); as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001); and as “a set of shared constraints and affordances, both ecological and societal, which influence human social behavior, values, beliefs, attitudes, self-construals and personality factors (Smith, Bond & Kagitcibasi, 2006). However, no consensus has been reached on one definition.

In cross-cultural research, culture is often examined in terms of dimensions of cultural variability. The following subsection reports on some of the most commonly used cultural dimensions.

1.1.1 Dimensions of Culture

The most widely known cultural dimension is the work of Hofstede (1980), whose four value dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power-distance, uncertainty-avoidance, and masculinity-femininity are used as organizing explanatory constructs in many disciplines. Among them, individualism-collectivism appears to be the most significant difference among cultures (Triandis, 1995). In individualistic cultures, people tend to emphasize self-actualization, individual initiatives and achievement, and an “I” identity. In collectivist cultures, in contrast, people focus on fitting in, belonging to the in-group, and maintaining a “we” identity. Group goals are given priority over personal goals, and interpersonal relationships are characterized by hierarchy and interdependence. Individualism is dominant among Western cultures, whereas collectivism is dominant among Asian cultures (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995).

Most of the other cultural dimensions identified are related and correlate empirically to the dimensions of Hofstede. For example, Smith, Dugan, and Trompenaars (1996) identified two value dimensions: egalitarian commitment versus conservatism, and utilitarian involvement versus loyal involvement. In line with these dimensions, generally speaking, Western cultures can be classified as universalistic (rules more important than relationships), individualistic, specific (responsibility is specifically assigned), affective (people display emotions), achievement-oriented (people have to prove themselves to receive status), sequential (people do things one at a time), and with a dominance of internal control (people control their environment), whereas Asian cultures are classified as particularistic (relationships is more important than rules), collectivistic, diffuse (responsibility is distributed), neutral (people do not show emotions), with a tendency of ascription (status is given to people), synchronic (people do several things at a time), and with a dominance of external control (people are controlled by environment).

Hall's (1976) scheme of low- and high-context communication provides another framework for cross-cultural comparison. According to Hall, low-context communication emphasizes directness, explicitness, and verbal expressiveness. High-context communication, on the other hand, involves indirectness, implicitness, and nonverbal expressions. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) noted that people in most individualistic cultures tend to use low-context communication, while high-context communication is utilized by people in most collectivist cultures.

Above is a brief overview of the general culture-level dimensions. In the next subsection, specific cultural characteristics of Germany and China will be described.

1.1.2 German and Chinese Culture Standards

Culture standards are termed as culturally specific orientation systems involving socially shared and accepted norms and values that are used by the individuals living within a particular culture to evaluate each other's behavior. These standards function as implicit theories or rules and are internalized by the individual during the process of socialization (Thomas, 2003). Culture standards relate to elements on the generalized country-level but not on the individual level, and therefore refer to the behavior of, for example, the "average German" or the "average Chinese" person (Schroll-Machl, 2003).

The following factors are identified as central **German culture standards** (Thomas, 2003; Schroll-Machl, 2003):

- Objectivism: e.g. emphasis on facts, rational thinking, personal relationship is subordinated to objective task
- Appreciation for rules and structures: emphasis on rules, priority of regulations
- Rule-oriented and internalized control: e.g. detailed planning and organizing, dislike of exceptions or interruptions, identification with one's task, keeping promises and contracts, equal justice and fairness to everyone, self-determination
- Time planning: e.g. planning one's time in advance, making exact schedules, keeping time schedules strictly, one task at a time
- Separation of personality and living spheres: e.g. formal contact in one's professional life vs. friendship in one's private life; rational thinking vs. private emotion
- Low-context communication: e.g. direct and explicit communication, no double meaning, direct expression of criticism, conflict confrontation
- Individualism: independence and autonomy, e.g. emotional distance from group, assertion of individual interests, expression of one's own opinions, obligation to treat everyone equally

Regarding **Chinese culture standards**, Thomas and Schenk (1996, 2005) reported the following:

- Social harmony: e.g. group orientation, emphasis on good relations with others, indirect communication, avoidance of conflict
- Hierarchy: acceptance of established hierarchy, behavior in accordance with status and roles

- Face saving: cautious communication, avoidance of confrontation, embarrassment
- *Guanxi* (network): importance of establishing interpersonal connections to get things done, weaker role of legal regulation
- Etiquette: e.g. modesty, politeness rituals
- Cunning and tactics: using strategies to achieve one's goals, pragmatism

Based on his comprehensive research on Chinese culture, Bond (1996) also identified various aspects of Chinese cultural orientations. Regarding the Chinese Self, he stated that it includes the following core elements: a) relations with others, *guanxi*, b) hierarchy and role relationships, and c) harmony and face. As can be seen, there is considerable consensus on the main Chinese culture standards among the above-mentioned researchers.

The present section has provided an overview of theoretical concepts of culture and culture standards. The next section will turn to some related empirical findings.

1.2 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GERMANY AND CHINA IN COGNITION, EMOTION, COMMUNICATION, AND THE “SELF”

This section will review main empirical studies regarding cultural differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures, focusing on cognition, emotion, communication, and the “Self”. It should be pointed out that studies comparing individualistic and collectivist cultures primarily involved samples from North America and East Asian countries; very few studies have specifically addressed cultural comparisons between Germany and China.

1.2.1 Cognition and Attribution

1.2.1.1 Cognition

Based on a series of empirical studies, Nisbett, Peng, Choi and Norenzayan (2001) defined the Western thinking style as analytic and the East Asian thinking style as holistic: *Analytic* thought involves detachment of the object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object in order to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules

about the categories and formal logic to explain and predict the object's behavior. *Holistic* thought involves an orientation to the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting events on the basis of such relationships. Holistic approaches rely on experience-based knowledge rather than abstract logic and are dialectical, meaning that there is an emphasis on change, recognition of contradiction, and a search for the “middle way” between opposing propositions.

The observed cultural differences in cognition may be due to differences in social structures and social practices that are rooted in ancient histories, philosophies, and sociological issues. For example, there were differences between the Western and Eastern practices of debate (consensus-based vs. adversarial), philosophical traditions (pragmatic and intuitive vs. formal logic and rational), and pedagogical practices (experience-based learning vs. critical thinking in classrooms, cf. e.g. Lloyd, 1990; Tweed & Lehman, 2002).

Nisbett et al. (2001) argued that cultural practices and cognitive processes constitute one another. Cultural practices encourage and sustain certain kinds of cognitive processes, which then perpetuate cultural practices. Thus a given cognitive process may be equally available in principle, but differentially accessible in different cultures.

1.2.1.2 Attribution

Dispositional and situational attributions

Cultural difference in attribution style is related to the cultural difference in cognition style (Nisbett et al. 2001). As mentioned above, Westerners tend to explain the behavior of objects, including that of people, in terms of properties of the object itself, whereas Easterners tend to see behavior as due to the interaction of the object with its field. Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan (1999) asked US and East Asian respondents to explain an individual's behavior for which either dispositional (e.g. ability) or situational explanations (e.g. luck) were possible. US respondents were found to attribute the cause to the individual, rather than to contextual determinants.

Besides the influence of cognition, attribution style is also mediated by the cultural difference in individualism versus collectivism. Morris and Peng (1994) found that Westerners tend to overemphasize internal disposition, whereas the Chinese refer more to situational factors when explaining social events. This tendency to over-attribute behavior

to personal rather than situational factors has been referred to as the “fundamental attribution error” (Ross, 1977) or “correspondence bias” (Gilbert & Malone, 1995).

Whereas previous studies usually concluded that people from individualistic cultures are more susceptible to the “fundamental attribution error” than are people from collectivist cultures (Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994), recent research indicates that the East-West cultural difference in attribution lies not in the absence of dispositional attribution in Asian countries, but is more likely due to Asians’ greater sensitivity to salient situational constraints. A number of studies demonstrated that East Asians and American respondents were equally willing to attribute social behavior to disposition when situational information was unavailable or nonsalient. Cultural differences occurred only when the situational information was salient. In this case, East Asians used more situational attribution than did Americans (Choi, Nisbett & Norenzayan, 1999; Norenzayan, Choi & Nisbett, 2002). Therefore, the East-West difference in attribution originates primarily from a stronger “situationism” or belief in the importance of the context of behavior in East Asia.

Attribution of success and failure

One problem regarding the simple dispositional-situational dimension in attribution is that it does not distinguish between success and failure situations and between interpersonal and achievement settings. Indeed, the cultural difference in attributions would be inexplicable in these situations if merely dispositional and situational attribution types were considered.

Past research has consistently showed that Westerners tend to attribute success to personal ability and failure to mood and other circumstances (Arkin, Cooper & Kolditz, 1980; Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). By contrast, Easterners are more likely to display little or no self-serving bias, or even engage in behavior which is the opposite of self-serving (Anderson, 1999; Kashima & Triandis, 1986). For example, both Chiu (1986) and Crittenden (1991) found that compared with US students, Chinese students were more likely to make external attributions for successes and internal attributions for failures. It is argued that due to the emphasis on the group in Asian cultures, attributing success to one’s own ability seems boastful, and may violate group norms. Similarly, attribution failure to external circumstances may be improper in a collectivist culture because such attributions may threaten social relations. By contrast, individualistic cultures emphasize autonomy and

efficacy which makes ability attribution relatively more acceptable (Anderson, 1999; Yu & Yang, 1991).

Using a complex design by distinguishing interpersonal (social interaction) and non-interpersonal (achievement situation) successes and failures, Anderson (1999) reported that Chinese participants made more ability attributions for failure in both situations. Interestingly, the result concerning success was more complicated. It was found that both Chinese and US participants made more ability attributions for non-interpersonal than for interpersonal success, but this difference was more pronounced for the Chinese participants. It seems that making ability attribution for achievement is acceptable for the Chinese as well. This finding demonstrated that Chinese attribution is domain-specific, and that attribution is supposed to fulfill certain social functions.

Social functions of attribution

Sociocultural contexts indirectly influence attributions through their influence on the values and expectations of the people in the interaction. Wan and Bond (1982) reported that Hong Kong students offered more self-serving attributions for their performance in a competitive game anonymously than they did in public. In He's (1991) study, Chinese participants responded in a more self-serving way when they were instructed that the test was to measure competence for a special job position than when they took it ostensibly as a self-test. These findings can be attributed to the relative importance placed on achievement in Chinese culture.

Another example of domain specificity and the sociocultural relatedness of Chinese attribution concerns the attribution of group performance. As described above, the Chinese are less likely to use self-serving attribution. However, modesty for individual attributions for success in Chinese culture is reversed for group-level attributions. It was found that Hong Kong students evaluated others more favorably if they offered group-serving, rather than group-effacing attributions for the group's performance (Bond, Chiu & Wan, 1984).

To summarize, systematic differences in preferred attribution styles are observed between people from individualistic and collectivist cultures. However, the precise pattern of cultural differences in attribution goes beyond the simple dispositional-situational dichotomy. Attributions are domain-specific and can vary with situational context. Future

research on attribution should be multi-faceted with respect to the more comprehensive system.

1.2.2 Emotion

Cross-cultural similarities

Past research on facial and vocal expressions of emotion has provided support for the universality hypothesis (Ekman & Friesen, 1971). For six emotions – anger, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, and happiness – there is a unique, pan-cultural facial expression.

In addition to facial expression, prior research also suggests more similarities than differences in the antecedents of emotion and the cognitive process that intervenes between eliciting events and emotional reactions (Russel & Yik, 1996). Stipek, Weiner, and Li (1989), for example, found a similar pattern concerning attribution-emotion linkages among Chinese and US respondents. More specifically, construal of someone as lacking ability elicited pity, construal of that person as lacking motivation elicited anger, and construal of that person as a victim of one's own failure elicited guilt.

Cross-cultural differences

Although “basic” dimensions such as pleasantness or degree of certainty in the cognitive appraisals of emotional antecedents show some similarities among Chinese and Westerners, many researchers have noted that events which elicit some more complex emotions or cognitive dimensions might vary across cultures (e.g. Russel & Yik, 1996; Yang & Yu, 1988).

For example, the process of attribution and emotion is influenced by achievement motivation. According to Yang and Yu (1988), achievement motivation can be individual-oriented, or social-oriented. These two types of achievement motivations are related to individualism and collectivism, respectively. Individual-oriented achievement motivation involves goal definition by the Self and the incentive value of goal attainment; social-oriented achievement motivation is associated with the dynamic tendency of individuals to reach an externally determined goal or standard of excellence in a socially approved way. An individual with individual-oriented achievement motivation may tend to ascribe his or her success to individually desirable personal qualities, whereas an individual with social-oriented achievement motivation may tend to emphasize socially valued personal qualities,

interventions of significant others, or collective efforts. For an individual with individual-oriented achievement motivation, positive emotions such as feelings of self-efficiency or pride result from individually oriented attributions; for an individual with social-oriented achievement orientation, affective reactions to success involve positive emotions resulting from socially oriented attributions, e.g. feelings of face-enhancement (social-oriented self-esteem), collective pride, or gratitude to others. In the same line of reasoning, emotions elicited by failure are more likely to be self-oriented (such as guilt and anger) for an individual with individual-oriented achievement motivation, and more social-oriented (such as shame, self-blame, or anxiety) for an individual with social-oriented achievement motivation.

Cultural differences also emerge in emotion regulation processes. Past research on “display rules” (Friesen, 1972) indicates that East Asians have more rules about controlling emotional expression than do Westerners. East Asians are socialized not to openly express their personal emotions, especially strong and negative ones (Argyle, Henderson, Bond, Iizuka & Contarello, 1986).

Friesen (1972), for example, found that Japanese students showed disgust when watching a film about mutilation alone, but not when viewing in the company of others. US participants, however, showed disgust in both situations. Another example is the expression of anger. Although anger is considered a universal human emotion, the expression of anger depends on the cultural context in which the anger-arousing event occurs. Many studies have shown that anger is less often expressed in collectivist cultures than in individualistic ones, due to possible negative consequences for social relationships (e.g. Kitayama, Markus & Kurokawa, 2000). Markus and Kitayama (1991) concluded that the expression of self-focused emotions such as pride or anger, which reflect personal satisfaction or frustration, are frequently suppressed in Asian countries because they are believed to destroy social harmony.

Concerning cross-cultural research on emotion, two questions remain: First, are there absolute differences in the emotions that are experienced by members of different cultures, or are emotions universal, but expressed more frequently in some cultures than others? Second, are the reported cultural differences “real”, or are they better interpreted in terms of differing cultural norms about the appropriateness of emotional expression? More research needs to be carried out to answer these questions.

1.2.3 Communication and Learning

1.2.3.1 Communication style

As described in culture standards (section 1.1), German communication style is characterized as low-context communication, whereas Chinese communication style is characterized as high-context communication.

German communication is very explicit and direct, leaves little “room for interpretation”; it is task-oriented, based on objectivity, and is clear and unambiguous. Germans get to the point quickly and directly; they state “no” clearly, engage in discussions and argumentations, and do not try to avoid conflicts (Thomas, 2003; Schroll-Machl, 2003).

Five major characteristics of the Chinese communication process have been identified: implicit communication, listening-centeredness, politeness, a focus on insiders, and face-directed communication (Gao, Ting-Tommy & Gudykunst, 1996). *Implicit communication* is contained, reserved, and indirect. It is marked by features such as questions instead of statements, adverbial modifiers such as “fairly”, “somewhat”, and “rather”, and the less frequent use of the first-person form “I”. In conversational exchanges, one is required to make inferences, read between the lines, and draw connections. *Listening-centeredness* reveals the concern of Chinese people for hierarchy, status, and the role of the speaker and listener. One should not, for example, present “definitive” statements in front of one’s superior. *Politeness* is a basic principle that the Chinese follow in their everyday communication. Gu (1990) suggested that the Confucian concept of politeness has four qualities: respectfulness (concern for the other’s face, status, and so forth), modesty (self-denigration), attitudinal warmth (demonstrations of kindness, consideration, and hospitality), and refinement (e.g. indirectness). The *focus on insiders* reflects the Chinese tendency to make distinctions between in-group members and out-group members. For example, Chinese tend to engage in honest conversations with in-group members, but are reluctant to disclose personal information to out-group members. *Face-directed communication* emphasizes face-saving strategies. Ting-Toomey (1988) identified three face concerns: self-face, other-face, and mutual-face. To avoid the threat of losing self-face, the Chinese will not reveal potentially embarrassing personal or family information to others. Incidents of misbehavior or wrongdoing are often concealed. The strong concern for other-face and mutual-face leads to a compliant style of speaking. The Chinese rarely give definitively

affirmative or negative answers like “yes” or “no”. They articulate their intentions in an indirect manner and leave room for negotiation in private. They also avoid arguing or overtly disagreeing with others in public.

In all, whereas the communication in Germany is largely used to project an image of Self (individualism), in Chinese culture, communication is not primarily utilized to affirm self-identity or to achieve individual needs and goals; rather, it primarily aims to maintain existing relationships among individuals, to reinforce role and status differences, and to preserve harmony within the group (Gao, Ting-Tommy & Gudykunst, 1996).

Chinese speaking practices often create difficulties for effective communications with Westerners. For example, Westerners view the Chinese as being unwilling to commit themselves to an opinion, or having no opinion at all, because the Chinese constantly refer to others’ views and state extensive background information before presenting their own opinions. The Chinese often “beat around the bush” so that Westerners cannot grasp what they really mean (Gao, Ting-Tommy & Gudykunst, 1996; Günthner, 1993).

The indirect and compliant style of Chinese communication may sometimes be incompatible with honest or truthful communication. For the Chinese, in many situations face-saving and harmony are considered more important than truthful communication. According to Chinese logic, it is embarrassing to argue with strangers, so one saves the face of all parties concerned by lying, as long as this is in the other party’s “best interests”. Indeed, compared to Westerners, the Chinese rated lying as less morally wrong (McLeod & Carment, 1987). Additionally, in many collectivist countries, morality consists of doing what the in-group expects. When interacting with the out-group, it is “moral” to exploit and deceive to benefit one’s in-group. In other words, morality is not applicable to all, but rather to only some members of one’s social environment (McLeod & Carment, 1987). In contrast to Chinese culture, the low-context culture views the pursuit of truth more important than the maintenance of relationships; false utterance is a serious matter. As a result of the different forms of social thinking about truth, misunderstandings in cross-culture interactions often occur: Westerners accuse the Chinese of being “evasive” or “duplicitous”; the Chinese (but only when pushed) accuse Westerners of being “insensitive” or “blunt” (Bond, 1986).

1.2.3.2 Conflict management

Conflict management styles are closely linked to one's concern for face. The Chinese attend more to face-work than Westerners and view conflict from a social rather than a task perspective (Gao, Ting-Tommy & Gudykunst, 1996), whereas Germans believe their discussion style to be task- and goal-oriented, and are insensitive to social factors (Schroll-Machl, 2003). In dealing with conflicts, the Chinese normally communicate in a way which may "leave room for interpretation", and try to avoid direct confrontation as much as possible (Gao, Ting-Tommy & Gudykunst, 1996). By contrast, Germans are usually very direct: they contradict, correct, discuss problems, and express criticism. It is acceptable to question others; each person takes his or her own position, is opinionated and argumentative (Schroll-Machl, 2003).

Ohbuchi, Fukushima, and Tedeschi (1999) noted that collectivists in conflict situations are primarily concerned with maintaining their relationship with others, whereas individualists are primarily concerned with achieving justice. Thus, the Chinese prefer mediation over adjudication in dispute processing, whereas Americans prefer these two procedures to the same extent (Leung, 1997; Bond & Wang, 1983). To the Chinese, compromise is framed as achieving a commonality of purpose that is preferable in that it implies a stronger, longer-term relationship. In contrast, to Americans, compromise may be viewed as necessary but is held to be a sub-optimal solution requiring the making of concessions (Leung, 1997).

How conflict is handled also depends on situational contexts. For instance, avoidance and non-confrontational strategies are preferred in collectivist cultures in disputes with in-group members (Pearson & Stephan, 1998), and with superiors (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Friedman, Chi & Liu, 2006).

1.2.3.3 Interpersonal interaction

Distinction of in- and out-group

In collectivist cultures, the boundary between in-group and out-group tends to be stronger and more consequential than in individualistic culture (e.g. Triandis, 1994). In China, in-group members and out-group members may be treated in a very different way. For instance, one will try his or her best to help family members or friends, but treat outsiders very indifferently (Bond, 1996; Leung & Bond, 1984; Thomas, 2003). In

Germany, the difference between in-group and out-group is not as clearly delineated as in Asia; closeness within groups is not so intense, and the distance to strangers is not as great. Moreover, there is a moral and legal obligation to treat all people equally (Schroll-Machl, 2003).

The distinction between in- and out-groups has an impact on many facets of Chinese behaviors. Schneider (1985) noted that the Chinese are more likely to express emotions with close friends than with strangers or acquaintances. Communication with in-group members can be very personal, but with out-group members it can be quite impersonal or harsh (Ting-Toomey, 1988). In comparison with Americans, the Chinese are more likely to pursue a conflict with a stranger than with a friend (Leung, 1988). Altogether, it seems that communication in high-context cultures can be direct in some settings and indirect in others depending on the group membership (Smith, Bond & Kagitcibasi, 2006).

Intergroup relation

Tajfel's (1981, 1982) social identity theory posites that individuals define themselves in terms of their social groups and therefore use intergroup comparisons which favor their in-group. For example, they tend to make dispositional attributions for negative behavior by an out-group member, and more external explanations for positive out-group behavior.

Other attitudinal variables which appear to be impediments to effective intergroup interactions involve ethnocentrism, prejudice, and stereotype (e.g. Brislin, 1981; Gudykunst, 2005b). *Ethnocentrism* is the tendency to view one's own culture as the only appropriate way of life. An ethnocentric person tends to evaluate other people's behavior according to his or her own cultural norms and values. A *prejudice* is a dislike based on false and inflexible generalizations. Prejudice negatively influences openness to new information and the subsequent interpretation and evaluation of that information. *Stereotypes* are overgeneralized beliefs that provide conceptual bases from which people make sense of the world. Stereotypes underlie expectation, influence perception, behaviors, attributions, and affective responses to individual group members (e.g. Neuberg, 1989). Since the out-group is usually less positively defined as the in-group, stereotypes of out-group often involve prejudiced and negative perceptions. However, it should be pointed out that there is also evidence showing that stereotypes of others are not always negative (e.g. Bond, 1986; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). For example, in Bond's (1986) study, both Chinese and US respondents saw the other culture as more social and beneficent than themselves.

Social network (*Guanxi*)

Many observers have noted that in China if one has no interpersonal connections it is often very difficult to achieve one's goals, especially for out-group members (e.g. Bond, 1986; Thomas, 2003). Chinese people take a lot of time and invest much energy establishing their personal social networks (Leung, 1996). In Germany, the establishment of personal relationships is seen as a nice side-effect, but not a priority, and the existing network of connections and relationships tends to be relatively small and restricted. The use of connections in Germany is limited to actual personal acquaintances; mediation or some arrangement through a third party is not acceptable (Schroll-Machl, 2003).

Chinese people's intensive use of social networking can be grounded in group-oriented beliefs and social practices. The collectivism of the Chinese leads them to believe that an effective way to get things done is through one's social network. Furthermore, although there exists an objective legal system in China, it does not play a decisive role in regulating people's behavior, or it does not work objectively and consistently so that people must count on their social networks (Bond, 1996).

1.2.3.4 Learning style

Biggs (1987) states that three types of learning styles – surface, deep, and achieving – are generally used by learners. The *surface* approach to learning is based on extrinsic motivation, such as obtaining a better job or simply keeping out of trouble. The *deep* approach to learning is based on an interest in the subject matter addressed by the task and aims to maximize understanding so that curiosity is satisfied. The *achieving* approach to learning is based on a particular form of extrinsic motive: the ego-enhancement that follows visible achievement and success.

In the eyes of many observers from Western countries, Chinese students usually passively rely on rote learning and take a non-critical and non-analytical approach to the information learned (Gow, Balla, Kember & Hau, 1996; Kember, 2000). Such attitudes and characteristics are not consistent with a self-managed style of learning, and are viewed as surface learning which was associated with poor academic outcomes in Western universities (Biggs, 1987; Watkins & Hattie, 1981). Moreover, Chinese students were mostly motivated by the prospect of a well-paid career upon graduation. Motivation of this type would normally be classified as extrinsic which is generally viewed in a negative light

(e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, career motivation has apparently not negatively influenced Chinese students' performance but rather improved their performance (Kember, Wong & Leung, 1999), and there is ample evidence showing that Chinese students are achievement-oriented and academically very successful. How can these seemingly contradictory facts be explained?

Firstly, as Yang and Yu (1988) noted, Chinese achievement motivation is social-oriented (see section 1.2.2). Social-oriented motivation does not equal extrinsic motivation. Although both involve instrumentalities, the former case entails personal endorsement and a feeling of choice, whereas the latter involves mere compliance with an external control. Therefore, the Chinese achievement motivation can be seen as social-oriented and intrinsically related (e.g. Bond, 1996).

The second explanation lies in a misunderstanding of the observed memorization. Researchers from a Western perspective tend to see memorization as a purely surface learning approach (Kember, Wong & Leung, 1999). However, many studies have indicated that the learning approach of Chinese students cannot be adequately described by the deep/surface dichotomy. The major distinction is that many Chinese students combine memorization with an attempt to understand. This approach is distinct from a surface approach, in which a student has no interest or intention of discovering underlying meaning (e.g. Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Marton, Dall'Alba & Tse, 1993).

Furthermore, it is argued that the Chinese tendency to use rote-learning approaches is a function of socialization processes and the learning context (e.g. Gow, Balla, Kember & Hau, 1996; Kember, 2000). As Biggs (1987) points out, the learning style adopted by students depends on both the sociocultural setting as well as the demands of the learning environment. Students are more likely to use a surface learning approach if they perceive that there is an excessive amount of material to be learned, a lack of choice over content and methods of study, and that the assessment system requires the reiteration of information. On the other hand, students are more likely to develop a deeper approach if they are given time for contemplation and discussion with other learners, and if their examinations test for the understanding of principle rather than the reproduction of facts and procedures. There is marked evidence that Chinese students use memorization in response to their perceptions of the requirements of the learning environment (for example, assessment systems in Chinese education). Research on overseas Chinese students

has shown that they are capable of adopting a deep approach if that is what the curriculum appears to warrant (e.g. Gow, Balla, Kember & Hau, 1996; Kember, 2000).

Many university teachers in the West have the impression that East Asian students are silent learners. They are quiet in class and do not participate (Chalmers & Volet, 1997). It is suggested that this happens because Asian educational systems encourage the methods of memorization and imitation rather than the capacity to analyze, discuss, question, and develop individual viewpoints (e.g. Abramovitch, Schreier & Koren, 2000). In the West, active and constructive learning are emphasized, whereas in Asian countries, learning is authoritarian and teacher-oriented (e.g. Bond, 1996; Lee, 1996).

Besides differences in education systems, students' beliefs of what is appropriate when interacting with teachers and other students also lead to different behaviors in class. As mentioned in the section on communication style, Chinese people value conformity and harmony in the group; therefore, they incline to show respect for the teachers (status concern) and maintain harmony in the classroom by avoiding counter-arguments or confronting statements, and refrain themselves from aggressive conversation or criticism (Lin-Huber, 2001). In Germany, however, discussions are considered professional and responsible; everyone is encouraged to voice their own opinion and raise questions. "Quietness" is equated with the incompetence to analyze and solve a problem (Schroll-Machl, 2003).

Language ability is also a factor which limits the extent to which students participate in class. Many East Asian students lack confidence in their foreign language ability and therefore avoid speaking in class (Chalmers & Volet, 1997).

1.2.4 The "Self"

In the preceding sections we have reviewed literature concerning cultural differences between Germany and China in cognition, emotion, and communication. These cultural characteristics are situated in and influenced by the premises of the respective cultures. To understand an individual's behavior, however, it is also necessary to recognize the individual characteristics that mediate the influence of cultural level tendencies of behaviors (e.g. Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996).

Individual characteristics are largely influenced by an individual's self-concept. Self-concept refers to an individual's self-perceptions that are (a) formed through experiences with, and interpretations of the environment, and (b) heavily influenced by reinforcements and evaluations by the significant others (Shavelson & Bolus, 1982). Self-concept has a strong impact on an individual's assumptions, concerns, and expectations; these elements, in turn, govern how one behaves.

In this section, Eastern and Western self-concepts and their implications for behaviors are discussed.

1.2.4.1 Self-construal

The most widely used conceptualization of self-construal are Markus and Kitayama's (1991) independent and interdependent self-construals. The *independent* self-construal refers to the belief that an individual's Self is a unique, independent entity. The important motivations for people emphasizing an independent self-construal are that they wish to be unique, to strive for their own goals, to express themselves, and to be direct. The *interdependent* self-construal entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing relationship; the Self in relation to specific others guides behavior in specific social situation. The important motivations for people emphasizing an interdependent self-construal are that they wish to fit in with the in-group, to act in an appropriate manner, to promote the in-group's goals, and to be indirect.

Members of individualistic cultures tend to emphasize the independent self-construal, while members of collectivist cultures emphasize the interdependent self-construal. Every individual, however, has both an independent and interdependent self-construal (Singelis, 1994; Triandis, Leung, Villareal & Clack, 1985).

With regard to the Chinese Self, the core elements identified include relations with others, hierarchy, and role relationships. As Gao (1994) argues, the Chinese Self is defined by *relations with others*. As a result, the Chinese prefer indirect communication and control their emotional expression so as to maintain good relations with others. Bond (1986) notes that the Chinese Self is also defined by *hierarchy* and *role relationships*. Everyone is expected to behave according to his or her status and roles. Harmony can be achieved if one maintains appropriate role relationships, is other-oriented, and accepts the established hierarchy.

1.2.4.2 Self-esteem and self-enhancement

A number of studies have shown that Westerners have highly positive self-perceptions, whereas Easterners have neutral or negative self-perceptions. For example, it was found that Chinese respondents reported a less positive ratio of statements about the Self than did American respondents (Ip & Bond, 1995); Japanese and Chinese participants described themselves less positively or even negatively, and report lower levels of self-esteem (Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999). It seems that this cultural difference in self-perception challenged the universality of the self-enhancement motive (Heine et al., 1999).

On the other hand, other studies provide evidence pointing to the universality of self-enhancement. For example, Chinese schoolchildren self-enhanced on the dimension of competence (Falbo, Poston, Triscari & Zhang, 1997), and Taiwanese employees rated themselves higher on job performance than their employers (Fahr, Dobbins & Cheng, 1991). Furthermore, studies using implicit measurement indicated that not only individualists but also collectivists have a robustly positive implicit self-concept, as manifested by name-letter preference in Japan (Murakami & Yamaguchi, 2000), and Singapore (Pelham, Koole, Hetts, Hardin & Seah, 2005).

How, then, can the striking discrepancy between these two lines of studies be accounted for? Several explanations are possible. First of all, the self-effacement of East Asians probably serves important social functions. It was found that those Chinese respondents who made self-effacing attributions for success were better liked by others (Bond, Leung & Wan, 1982). This is because humility is a salient norm in Chinese society, and the modesty in self-evaluating is an important element in maintaining group cohesiveness. Wan and Bond (1982) reported that self-effacement is probably an impression management tactic as well. Their study showed that Chinese participants made self-effacing attributions for their performance in public but self-enhancing attributions in private. In line with this finding, Kemp (1994) also found that secondary school children in Hong Kong reported a higher level of self-concept in an anonymous situation than in a situation where they were identifiable. The above-mentioned findings which showed the self-enhancing behavior of Chinese people in performance situations (Falbo, Poston, Triscari & Zhang, 1997; Fahr, Dobbins & Cheng, 1991) reveal that self-enhancement is more persistent and pervasive on important as compared to unimportant attributes or situations, which indicates the effect of context.

Bond (1996) suggested differentiating between self-enhancement and self-regard. He argued that it is probable that the Chinese do have a less positive self-concept than do Westerners. However, as many other researchers have pointed out, the need for self-regard is universal. Prior research on the relation between self-effacing attributional style and psychological health (i.e. depression and loneliness) lends support to this proposition. It was found that both in individualistic (United States) and collectivist (China) cultures, self-effacing attribution leads to poorer psychological health (Anderson, 1999). Furthermore, the three intrinsic needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – which have been posited as universal according to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) were indeed rated consistently high by both individualistic (United States) and collectivist (South Korea) samples (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim & Kasser, 2001).

1.2.4.3 Locus of control

Locus of control has been defined as a generalized belief in internal versus external control over events (Rotter, 1966). *Internal* locus of control refers to the perception that positive and negative events are consequences of one's behavior and under one's personal control; *external* locus of control refers to the perception that these events are not contingent upon one's behavior but are caused by factors such as fate, luck, or chance.

When asked whether they believe that the events in their lives have been caused by themselves or by some external factor, such as chance, other people, and so forth, Chinese respondents regarded external forces as most influential. It is proposed that because of the collectivist orientation of Chinese people, they tend to possess a stronger belief in external control than do Westerners (Hamid, 1994). Furthermore, as Bond (1986) points out, the Chinese are more “cabined, cribbed, and confined” than Westerners by family responsibilities, political authority, and classroom control. Therefore, their responses of external control reflect this social reality, similar to persons from other cultures in which the majority of the population has little power, such as India, the Philippines, and Venezuela.

On the other hand, studies employing a more complex conceptualization of control suggest that the externality of the Chinese is context-specific (Leung, 1996). Chan (1989) administered Rotter's I-E scale to Hong Kong Chinese students and compared the results with those obtained by Parsons and Schneider's (1974) eight-country study. Parsons and

Schneider (1974) classified the I-E items into five content areas: luck-fate, respect, academics, leadership-success, and politics. The findings revealed that Chinese respondents were more internal in terms of respect, academics, and leadership-success than respondents from several Western nations (including the United States, Germany, Italy, and France), and were only more external than respondents from these Western nations on the luck-fate dimension. Evidence for the proposition that the Chinese belief of control is context-specific also comes from studies on the attribution of success and failure. Chinese make external attributions for success and internal attributions for failure (e.g. Chiu 1986; Crittenden, 1991; see section 1.2.1).

Altogether, it seems that the general conclusion that the Chinese are more external than Westerners is an oversimplification and that Chinese externality is context-specific.

A construct which is closely related to internal and external control concerns primary and secondary control. Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) have reported that in the West, a dominant way to attain one's goals and wishes is to attempt to bring about objective changes in the environment; this type of control is called *primary control*. Weisz, Rothbaum, and Blackburn (1984) stated that while primary control is the predominant strategy in the West, *secondary control* is prevalent in the East. Under this strategy, because of the emphasis on interdependence and harmony in groups, people show a stronger tendency to adjust themselves to fit the environment. Based on this argument, it is possible that the Chinese may believe that secondary control is a more effective means to attain their goals than is primary control. Peng and Lachman (1993) found that Chinese-American respondents scored lower on primary control and higher on secondary control than did American respondents.

1.2.4.4 Consistency of the Self

As can be seen from the above literature review, East Asians often behave differently according to varied situational contexts. This flexibility of behavior suggests that East Asians' experience of Self is highly variable across social contexts (e.g. Rosenberger, 1989; Smith, Bond & Kagitcibasi, 2006). The unity, integrity, and internal consistency of the Self – which is emphasized in Western cultures – is not as evident in East Asian countries. Rather, East Asians appear to be more concerned with the management of a multiplex,

dialectical Self. The results of the three studies described below are especially relevant in this regard.

Kanagawa, Cross, and Markus (2001) asked Japanese and American respondents to answer the question “Who are you?” in one of four different social contexts (alone, in the presence of an authority figure, in a large non-interactive group, and interacting with a peer). The Japanese respondents showed significantly more variation across conditions than did American respondents. This difference indicates greater contextual sensitivity in Japanese self-description. Suh (2002) asked Koreans and Americans to rate themselves on 20 personality traits in five different social contexts (with friends, parents, a professor, someone younger, and a stranger). Results showed less consistent self-rating of Koreans, reflecting that the identity of East Asians is malleable, multiple, and changing. Although there might be a greater use of tact and diplomacy in Asian nations, past research suggests that not only the use of tact and diplomacy in different settings is greater, but also that East Asian respondents actually sense that they are a different person in each setting (Bond, 1996). For example, it was found that more than half of the Chinese and Japanese respondents, but only a minority of the Canadian respondents, rejected the notion of an inner Self that persists unchanged across contexts (Tafarodi, Lo, Yamaguchi, Lee & Katsura, 2004).

The heightened concern of East Asians with social harmony has been used to explain their greater tendency towards personal adjustment (Morling, Kitayama & Miyamoto, 2002). In addition, the greater emphasis on restraint, compliance, and sensitivity to the formality-informality social practices in East Asian countries also lead to a changing Self (Tafarodi, Lo, Yamaguchi, Lee & Katsura, 2004).

Paralleling the inconsistency of the Self, East Asians are more willing to adapt behaviors when interacting in different cultural or social contexts. Adair, Okumura, and Brett (2001) showed that Japanese negotiating intra-culturally used indirect information exchange more than Americans did. When negotiating cross-culturally, the Japanese modified their approach, moving towards the US style of direct information exchange. The US negotiators, however, did not modify their style. Another example is provided by Li's (2004) study of eye contact. Chinese subjects made eye contact with one another less frequently than did Canadians. However, when interacting with Canadians, the Chinese increased their level of eye contact to the Canadian level. The accommodation to others

can be seen as an instance of “self-monitoring”, with East Asians being more ready to self-monitor their behaviors.

1.3 CHANGES IN CHINESE SOCIETY, VALUES, AND SELF-CONCEPT

Over the past decades, China has undergone remarkable changes in social and economic issues, educational systems, as well as family and population structures (as in the “one child per family” policy). The process of modernization and globalization has caused pervasive changes in social practices, values, and behaviors of Chinese people.

One example of cultural change under modernization is discussed in Chang’s study (2004). He asked Chinese parents what types of social behaviors were desirable in their child. Only 24% of the parents endorsed traditional Chinese “good child” behaviors, such as self-constraint, obedience, and listening to others. In contrast, 87% of parents endorsed pro-social leadership behaviors, such as making friends, getting along with others, and being a leader.

The above-mentioned value change was also associated with the change in social structures. Due to the “one-child” policy in China, parents in one-child families are less authoritarian and more concerned that their children do well in school, while only children are more self-centered, aggressive, and extroverted than children of Chinese multiple-child families (Chang, Schwartz, Dodge, and McBride-Chang, 2003).

Many researchers have reported that in today’s China, orientations towards the family, the other, relationships, and authority have been decreasing, whereas orientations towards the self, independence, competition, and egalitarian principles have been increasing. In other words, as a result of modernization, Chinese people have tended to become less socially oriented and more individually oriented (e.g. Liao & Hwang, 1992; Lan, 1994; Yang, 1988).

In light of the rapid changes in Chinese society, one question arises, namely: Which traditional values or psychological characteristics will be partially or completely replaced by modern ones and which will be able to coexist alongside modern values? Yang (1988) claimed that some of the Chinese people’s most important traditional attitudes and values (e.g. filial piety) need not be replaced by modern ones. Yang’s findings were supported by

Brindley's (1989/90) interview data, which indicated that traditional values such as relationship orientation, moral- and self-cultivation, filial piety, and paternalism coexisted along with modern values such as scientific thinking, utilitarianism, materialism, and independence among academic elites in Taiwan.

It may be said that those values which have "specific functionality" (Yang, 1988) have remained intact and will persist (Bond, 1996). An example of this is demonstrated in Yang's (1988) study. In this study, immigrant Chinese parents reported greater parental control and emphasis on achievement compared to American parents. However, contrary to expectations, Chinese parents indicated greater encouragement of independence in their children than did American parents. This finding provides evidence that interdependence within the family was stressed to maintain family coherence; at the same time, independence beyond the family was encouraged to facilitate achievement within the larger society.

1.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented a brief description of cultural dimensions and culture standards. It has reviewed major relevant studies with regard to cultural differences between Germany and China. The review covers cross-cultural comparisons of attribution style, emotional expression, communication style, interpersonal interaction, conflict management, learning strategies, and the concept of the "Self". The chapter ends with a discussion of the socio-cultural and value changes in the modern Chinese society.

Cultural system encompasses values, norms, and beliefs; culture provides its members with an implicit theory about how to behave and how to interpret others' behavior. Past research findings generally converge on some most prevailing pattern of Chinese cultural characteristics such as collectivism, hierarchy, and harmony. Central German cultural characteristics include individualism, objectivism, and low-context communication.

Different cultural values and norms result in differences in which behaviors are encouraged, reinforced or sanctioned under varied circumstances. For example, in Chinese culture, the modulation of one's behavior to keep the social harmony is valued. As a result, the direct expression of negative emotions is inhibited and the indirect communication is commonly applied.

Although cultural value has proved to be a central factor influencing people's behavior, we need to be aware of that cultural differences are also a function of situational contexts. Compared with Westerners, Asians are more attuned to others; they are willing to adapt their behavior to a change in context, and show greater variation in behavior across different social situations. For example, Chinese social interaction is stereotypically "collectivist" (cooperative or harmonious) in certain social contexts, but in others exhibits an "individualist" (competitive, agonistic) style; Chinese attributional style varies across sociocultural contexts, and can not definitely be defined as external; and Chinese self-enhance in some situations (e.g. group achievement), but self-efface in other situations (e.g. individual achievement). In addition, some cultural practices are better thought of as culturally socialized habits. For example, Chinese students may use more memorization to meet the demands of the learning environment in China. They are, however, capable of adopting a deep approach if that is what the curriculum appears to warrant. Moreover, we must distinguish between ideology, or "ideal culture", and on-the-ground behavior, or "real culture". Finally, changes in social and economic issues may lead to changes in social practices, values, and behavior. In China, for example, people have tended to become less socially oriented and more individually oriented.

In sum, we demonstrate the inter-relationship between culture and people's behavior, and how the Chinese cognition, emotion, and communication processes only can be understood and interpreted in the situational context.

Aiming to examine the role of situational context in German and Chinese behavior, and to identify the current cultural differences between Germany and China, especially in the context of academic life of exchange students, I conducted an empirical study examining cross-cultural experiences of German and Chinese exchange students and assessing cultural orientations of German and Chinese students. This study is presented in chapter 2. Based on the results of this study and the review of the literature concerning cross-cultural adjustment (chapter 3), I attempted to provide a framework for a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students (chapter 4).

2 AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF GERMAN AND CHINESE EXCHANGE STUDENTS

In this chapter, the empirical study is presented. The chapter begins with a description of the research questions (section 2.1), followed by a description of the methodology including participants, instruments, design, and hypothesis (section 2.2). In section 2.3, the results are presented. Finally, in section 2.4, the results of the study are discussed.

2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study primarily aims to identify cross-cultural differences between German and Chinese students in cognition, emotion, and communication, and to explore the potential cross-cultural difficulties which may result from such cultural differences. It also compares self- and cross-cultural perceptions of German and Chinese local and exchange students to examine potential perception bias. The following research questions were addressed:

- (1) Are there any cultural differences between Germany and China in cognition, emotion and communication in the context of academic life of students?

In the following, some specific research questions regarding attribution style, emotional response, and communication style are formulated:

- a. Do situations (context) play a more important role in mediating the behavior of Chinese students than that of German students?
- b. Do Germans attribute both success and failure to personal factors, whereas the Chinese attribute success to situational factors, and failure to personal factors? Is the internal attribution style of Germans consistent in all situations, whereas the situational attribution style of Chinese people is a matter of domain?
- c. Do the same outcomes (positive or negative) elicit similar emotions among Germans and Chinese? Compared with Germans, do the Chinese feel less anger with an in-group member than with an out-group member in a conflict?
- d. Do the Chinese adjust their communication style according to the situation?

- (2) Is the cross-cultural perception in convergence with the self-perception; that is, are the descriptions made by exchange students with regard to behaviors of their host nationals in accordance with the self-perception of local students?
- (3) Are the cultural differences as reported in the literature consistent with the cultural differences as reported by the exchange students according to their own experiences?
- (4) Have the perceived cultural differences led to difficulties/problems for exchange students during their study abroad?

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Participants

Participants included four groups of students: German exchange students in China, Chinese exchange students in Germany, German local students, and Chinese local students.

German exchange students in China: Thirty-seven German exchange students (27 men, 10 women) participated in the study. They were recruited from three Chinese universities: Tong-ji University in Shanghai, Nanjing University in Nanjing, and Beijing University in Beijing. Their ages ranged from 22 to 30 years ($M=24.57$ years, $SD=2.13$). The German students had studied on the Chinese campuses for one or two semesters, generally taking courses in Chinese language, business, or engineering. The average length that the participants resided in Chinese universities was 7.27 months (Range=3-15 months).

Chinese exchange students in Germany: The sample consisted of 47 Chinese exchange students coming from mainland China studying at the University of Clausthal and University of Freiburg in Germany. 23 were males and 24 were females. The ages ranged from 21 to 29 years ($M=22.79$, $SD=1.74$). Since most Chinese students in Germany study engineering, science, or business, participants in this study were recruited from these disciplines. Furthermore, in order to match the German sample, the majority of the Chinese participants were selected among junior students in their first or second semester with just a few of senior students who have been in Germany for a long time being included. The average length of stay for the whole sample was 11.55 months. The range was from 2 to 34 months.

German local students: The sample of national German students was composed of 52 students from the University of Freiburg and the University of Karlsruhe. 34 were males and 18 were females. The average age was 21.56 years (range=18 to 25 years, $SD=1.70$). Students from a number of disciplines were sampled: engineering and information technology (29%), business (27%), mathematics (25%), and foreign language (19%).

Chinese local students: A total of 42 Chinese undergraduate students, 22 males and 20 females, participated in the study. They attended the same universities in which the German exchange students were studying – that is, the Universities of Tongji-, Nanjing-, and Beijing in China. The participants' average age was 21.14 years (range=18-24 years, $SD=1.34$). Their study majors were varied, with most studying science, engineering, business, or law.

Among both German and Chinese participants, only three German exchange students have received cross-cultural training before their study abroad. With regard to intercultural experience, 59% of the German exchange students had previous experience (more than three months) living abroad before their arrival in China; no Chinese exchange students had international experience before coming to Germany.

2.2.2 Questionnaire and Interview

The main instrument for the study was a questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews as a complementary method were also conducted with some participants in order to gain additional information.

Development of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed on the basis of a comprehensive literature review of cultural differences between Germany and China in cognition, emotion, and communication. The items were derived from reports in the literature involving cultural differences between these two countries.

Before the final data collection, the first version of the questionnaire underwent a pretest. The author approached 11 Chinese exchange students at the University of Freiburg and two German students who had recently returned from their sojourn in China. All students agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. The participants were interviewed about their experience in cross-cultural transition and their perceptions of the other culture.

The interview was semi-structured, aimed to find out which cultural differences played important roles in the context of the academic environment. The participants also completed the questionnaire. After that, they were asked about their opinions concerning the structure of the questionnaire, its plausibility and applicability, and suggestions for potential new items to be included. Based on the rich and in-depth feedback received, the questionnaire was reformatted and revised to be more appealing and accessible.

The questionnaire was originally prepared in German, then – by the method of back translation (Brislin, 1970) – translated into Chinese by a native Chinese speaker (the author) and finally translated back into German by another bilingual Chinese speaker. Discrepancies were discussed and inconsistencies were resolved to ensure linguistic equivalence. The German and Chinese participants responded to questionnaires written in their own language.

In the following, the content of the questionnaire will be briefly described. The complete questionnaire can be viewed in the appendices.

Contents of the questionnaire

In addition to personal and background information such as age, academic major, length of residence, host language ability, prior international experience, etc. (the latter three only for the version for the exchange students), the questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Part 1 of the questionnaire presented the cultural difference between Germany and China as reported in the literature. This part was answered exclusively by the exchange students. They were asked to make judgments about whether the reported cultural differences were true and accurate according to their personal experience, to comment on the relevance of these cultural differences in the context of their lives as foreign students, and whether these differences have led to problems or difficulties in their cross-cultural living. It contained 14 statements regarding cognition, emotion, communication, social interaction, and cultural orientation. An example item is shown below:

(For German exchange students in China; original text in German)

It is reported that the way Chinese and Germans express refusals is different: Chinese usually express their refusals in an indirect way, for example, they avoid saying “no” directly.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you’ve chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

The corresponding statement for the Chinese version was formulated in a reverse way. It reads as follows:

(For Chinese exchange students in Germany; original text in Chinese)

It is reported that the way Germans and Chinese express refusals is different: Germans usually express their refusals in a direct way using explicit and unambiguous words.

On a 6-point scale ranging from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (6), the participants rated the extent to which they had perceived the given cultural difference. And using a 6-point response ranged from “not problematic at all” (1) to “very problematic” (6), the participants articulated whether the given cultural difference led to problems in their lives.

The statements about cultural differences used in this questionnaire are briefly described in Table 1.

Statements	Germany	China
hierarchy at university	less	more
structure of the academic study	less structured	more structured
discussion in course	more	less
presenting information	important point at beginning, direct	general introduction at the beginning, important points at the end, indirect
reasons for choice of academic study	self-actualization	pragmatism
planning or flexibility	planning	flexibility
displaying negative emotions	more	less
emphasis on social networks or rules	rules	social networks
indirect or direct communication	direct	indirect
dealing with conflicts	confrontation	avoidance
expressing criticism	directly	not directly
expressing refusals	directly	not directly
making promises	“meant as said”	social harmony more important than “truth”
face concern	low	high

Table 1. Statements regarding cultural differences between Germany and China

Part 2 of the questionnaire has two different versions: one for the local students and one for the exchange students. Local students were requested to report their own behavioral tendencies in the given situation (self-perception). Exchange students were

asked to make judgments about how the host national students would probably behave in that given situation (cross-cultural perception).

This part of the questionnaire contained a series of scenarios including communication in important/unimportant situations, modesty in important/unimportant situations, conflict with in/out-group members, attribution of success/failure, and emotional response to positive/negative outcomes.

As can be seen, each scenario consisted of two contrasting situations aiming to capture social and situational variation, as it is revealed in the literature that behaviors - especially those of Chinese people - depend strongly on situational contexts. Although meanings of situations may be perceived differently by each individual, the understanding of situations (e.g. the importance of the situation) in this study was confirmed by the participants in the pretest.

The example below is drawn from the questionnaire for German exchange students. It shows the scenario “communication” involving an unimportant and an important situation.

Example of scenario “communication” for (German) exchange students

Preceding the questions, the instructions required the exchange student to imagine him- or herself interacting with a typical local student.

(situation: unimportant)

You and a Chinese student are visiting an art exhibition. The Chinese student dislikes the painting, which is, however, your favorite.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

(situation: important)

You and a Chinese student are asked by your professor to complete an assignment. Your performance will be graded. The Chinese student completely disagrees with your solution; he/she has a totally different idea.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

Participants then read questions containing items with regard to potential behaviors:

- a) Express his/her opinion directly
- b) Express his/her opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases like “perhaps”, “it could be”...
- c) Make no comments on your position
- d) Suggest asking the art expert/professor for his or her opinion

For each item, participants were asked to rate on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “not likely” (1) to “most likely” (6) the extent to which they believed the local student would behave as described in the items, with higher scores indicating higher agreement. The participants also had the option of indicating other possible behaviors.

In the questionnaire for Chinese exchange students, the instructions were identical, except that the counterpart was a German local student.

Scenarios for local students referred to interactions between national students. The settings were nearly identical with those in the questionnaire for exchange students, with the variation that the other person in the scenario was also a local student. Respondents were asked how they themselves would behave in the situation. It reads as follows:

Example of the scenario “communication” for local students

(situation: unimportant)

You and another student are visiting an art exhibition. You dislike the painting, which is, however, the favorite of the other student.

How do you behave?

(situation: important)

You and another student are asked by your professor to complete an assignment. The performance will be graded. You completely disagree with the solution of the other student; you have a totally different idea.

How do you behave?

- a) Express your opinion directly
- b) Express your opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases such as “perhaps”, “it could be”...
- c) Make no comments on the position of the other student
- d) Suggest asking the professor (an art expert) for his/her opinion

The following Table 2 includes a brief description of each scenario:

Scenario	Situations	
Communication	important (performance)	unimportant (expressing differing taste in a painting)
being modest	important (job application)	unimportant (receiving compliment for one's homework)
Conflict	in-group member (bike collision with a friend)	out-group member (bike collision with an unknown student)
Attribution	success (successful thesis)	failure (failed thesis)
Emotion	positive outcome (successful thesis)	negative outcome (failed thesis)

Table 2. Description of scenarios used in the questionnaire

Follow-up interview

The interview method was employed to complement the data obtained from the questionnaire and to gain more in-depth information about the cross-cultural experience and adjustment of the exchange students.

After completing the questionnaire, some of the German and Chinese exchange students were individually interviewed by the author. The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted using the native language of the participants. Five German exchange students and twelve Chinese exchange students were invited to reflect on the issue of their experiences and perceptions; questions revolved around the students' general impression of the host culture and the university, their daily challenges in a new culture, their perceptions of the host nationals, and cross-cultural difficulties related to their work at the university. The duration of the interview was about 30 minutes, and the interviews were recorded in protocols.

2.2.3 Procedure

Since a large percentage of German exchange students were studying at the Universities of Tongji-, Beijing-, and Nanjing, the data was collected at these three universities. It was important to ensure as complete participation as possible, as there were relatively few subjects. The German exchange students were recruited through the universities' international student offices. They were informed via email that the study was looking at how international students perceived their cross-cultural experience, and were requested to fill out the questionnaire and return it anonymously to the student office.

The Chinese exchange students at the University of Clausthal were recruited through the Chinese student club. The questionnaires were administered in large group sessions by the author with the support of the head of the student club. Informed consent was obtained prior to questionnaire administration. The Chinese exchange students at the University of Freiburg were approached by the author, while sitting alone in the library or cafeteria. There is a strong norm of mutual helping on campus among Chinese, and all of those asked filled out the questionnaires.

The participants were given as much time as they needed, with all of them completing the questionnaire within 30 minutes. They were paid 5€ each.

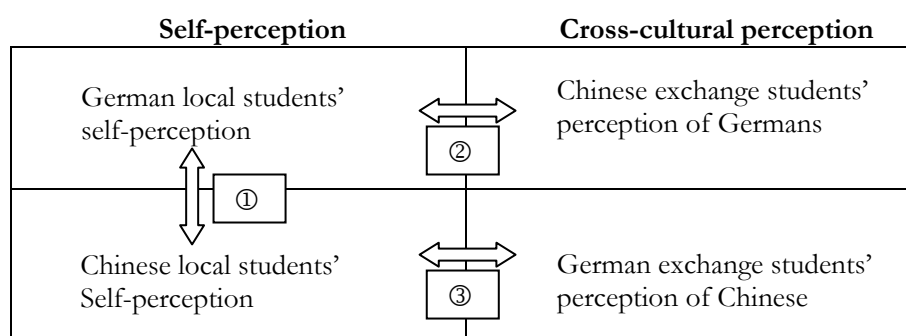
In the case of German and Chinese local students, tutors of student courses were contacted and asked to support this research. The study was then conducted at the end of the courses in the classroom setting. The students who agreed to attend the study answered the questionnaires and returned them to the tutor. The questionnaire required about 15 minutes to complete, and the participants were paid 3€ each.

All participants were assured that their answers would be private and confidential.

2.2.4 Design

Part 1 of the questionnaire related to research questions 3 and 4. It examined cultural differences between Germany and China in the context of academic environment, and explored the cross-cultural difficulties facing exchange students. The exchange students were presented statements concerning cultural differences between Germany and China as reported in the literature, and were asked whether these reported cultural differences were consistent with their own experiences. They were also asked whether the cultural differences may have led to difficulties for them.

Part 2 of the questionnaire referred to research questions 1 and 2. It assessed self-perception of the local students and cross-cultural perception of the exchange students. The self-perception was then compared with the cross-cultural perception. The following illustrates the research design:



① Comparing self-perceptions of the German and Chinese local students. In this way, the cultural differences between Germany and China were examined.

② Comparing German local students' self-perception with Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Germans

③ Comparing Chinese local students' self-perception with German exchange students' cross-cultural perception of the Chinese

② and ③ were conducted to examine whether there were any convergency/divergency between self- and cross-cultural perceptions.

In the Part 2 of the questionnaire, experimentally varied situational scenarios were used to assess the impact of the situational context on participants' behavior. Each scenario consisted of two different situations. A 2 (Nation: Germany vs. China) \times 2 (Situation: A vs. B) design was applied. For example, regarding scenario "communication", the 2 \times 2-factor design was as follows (the whole scenario is described in 2.2.2):

		Situation	
		Important situation (performance)	Unimportant situation (expressing differing taste in a painting)
Nation	Germany	directness/indirectness/no comments/seeking the advice of senior	directness/indirectness/no comments/seeking the advice of senior
	China	Directness/indirectness/no comments/seeking the advice of senior	Directness/indirectness/no comments/seeking the advice of senior

As can be seen, the importance of the situation was varied (important vs. unimportant), and four variables regarding communication style (directness/indirectness/no comments/seeking the advice of senior) were examined. The local students reported how they

themselves would behave in the situation, and the exchange students made predictions how the host nationals would behave in that situation.

2.2.5 Hypotheses

To investigate the research questions, the following hypotheses were tested:

Research question 1 (cultural differences between Germany and China in cognition, emotion and communication in the context of academic environment).

It is proposed that there are cultural differences between Germany and China in attribution, emotion, and communication: German students are expected to apply more internal attribution, express emotions more overtly, communicate more directly, and draw less strong boundary between in- and out-group than the Chinese do.

In the following, some more specific hypotheses are investigated. Since the study has tested many variables, for reasons of space, not all of them are addressed in this hypothesis section. Only the most interesting ones are listed below:

- **Research question 1.a (role of situation in mediating behavior).**

As prior research indicates, compared to Westerners, East Asians are much more willing to adjust their behavior to situational demands. Therefore, it is predicted that Chinese participants will show more behavioral adjustment in various situational contexts than do German participants. Specifically, Chinese people are expected to communicate more directly in important situations than in unimportant situations, whereas Germans will use direct communication in both situations. Similarly, it is predicted that the Chinese tend to show modesty in an unimportant situation, but not in an important situation, whereas Germans tend to show less modesty than do Chinese in both situations.

- **Research question 1.b (attributional style).**

As mentioned in section 1.2.1, compared to Westerners, the Chinese are more likely to attribute success to external factors and failure to internal factors. This leads to the hypothesis that Chinese participants will attribute success more to the group and to the situation than to personal ability. Moreover, compared with German participants, Chinese participants are expected to accept more responsibility for failure, and therefore are less likely to attribute failure to the others and to the group.

- **Research question 1.c (emotional response).**

It is expected that the linkage of eliciting situations and emotional responses is the same among German and Chinese participants. However, it is proposed that the Chinese will feel more pride in group performance than do Germans. Furthermore, Chinese participants will express less anger than do Germans when facing negative outcomes. Finally, it is hypothesized that the Chinese will show less anger in conflicts with in-group members than in conflicts with out-group members, whereas the differentiation of in-group and out-group is less strong among German participants.

- **Research question 1.d (communication style).**

Compared with the German students, Chinese students will be more likely to adjust their communication style according to the situation. It is expected that Chinese students will use indirect communication in an unimportant situation, but will significantly reduce this indirectness in an important situation.

Research question 2 (convergency/divergency between self- and cross-cultural perceptions of German and Chinese students).

Since the subjective perceptions are determined by a number of factors including situational contexts or individual experience, it is difficult to predict which kind of misperceptions may occur, and in which situations they will occur. Nevertheless, given the fact that behavior of Chinese people are more highly dependent on situations than that of Germans, there is reason to expect that German exchange students may make more misperceptions of Chinese behavior because they underestimate the situational influence on Chinese behavior.

Research question 3 (consistence/inconsistence between cultural differences as reported in the literature vs. as reported by the exchange students according to their personal experiences).

As mentioned above, subjective perceptions are determined by a number of factors, it is therefore difficult to predict how the exchange students may experience their cross-cultural living. Therefore, no specific predictions are made.

Research question 4 (cross-cultural difficulties for German and Chinese exchange students).

It is expected that German and Chinese exchange students will perceive difficulties in cross-cultural transitions due to cultural differences. The largest problem for both German and Chinese students are expected to be caused by the different communication styles.

2.3 RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the current study. The presentation of the results is organized into four subsections: cultural differences between Germany and China relating to research question 1 (2.3.1), comparison of self- and cross-cultural perceptions relating to research question 2 (2.3.2), cultural characteristics as reported in the literature versus cultural characteristics as perceived by the exchange students relating to research question 3 (2.3.3), and finally, experienced difficulties by the exchange students during study abroad relating to research question 4 (2.3.4).

2.3.1 Cultural Differences between Germany and China in Attribution, Emotion and Communication in the Context of Academic Environment

This section reports the results of the self-perceptions of German and Chinese local students in attribution style, emotional response, communication style, expressing modesty, and dealing with conflict.

2.3.1.1 Cultural differences in attribution

The scenario assessing attribution involved two situations which read as follows:

(situation: success)

You and another student completed a seminar paper together. This seminar paper was given a top grade by your professor.

To what do you attribute this success?

(situation: failure)

You and another student completed a seminar paper together. This seminar paper was graded as “unacceptable” by your professor.

To what do you attribute this failure?

- a) to yourself, e.g. your own ability
- b) to the other student, e.g. his/her ability
- c) to the group performance
- d) to the situation, e.g. an easy task, a nice professor

A 2 (Nation: Germany vs. China) \times 2 (Situation: success vs. failure) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures (for the factor Situation) was performed to test the dependent variable “attribution”. Results showed that there was an effect of the Nation ($F[4,88]=4.94, p<.01, \eta^2=.18$) and an effect of the Situation ($F[4,88]=29.89, p<.01, \eta^2=.58$). There was no significant interaction between Nation and Situation ($F[4,88]=2.43, n.s.$). Figure 1 displays the results.

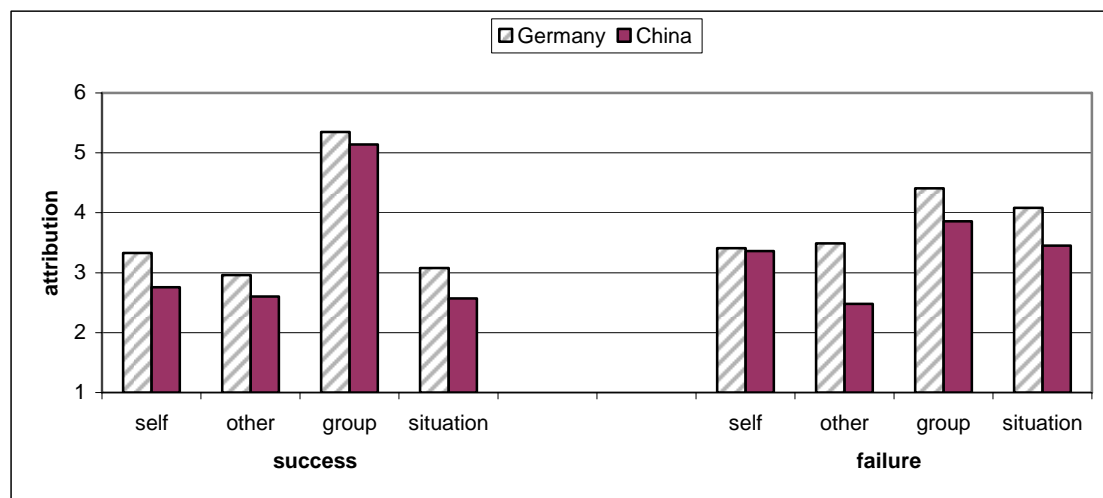


Figure 1. Differences in attribution style between Germans and Chinese in success and failure situations

Self-attribution. The ANOVA on the frequency of self attributions found no significant effect, which means that Chinese and German participants did not differ in self-attribution.

Other attribution. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of Nation, $F(1,91)=14.28, p<.01, \eta^2=.14$. Chinese participants made fewer other attributions than did German participants ($M_s=3.23$ and 3.67 , respectively).

The Nation by Situation interaction was also significant, $F(1,91)=5.68, p<.05, \eta^2=.59$. German participants made more other attributions for failure than for success than did Chinese participants (Germany: $M_s=3.49$ and 2.96 ; China: $M_s=2.48$ and 2.60). It was found that Chinese participants were less likely to blame others for failure than were Germans. This result supports the hypothesis that the Chinese are more likely to accept responsibility for failure.

Group attribution. Group attribution yielded main effects of Nation and Situation, $F_{\text{S}}(1,91)=5.21$ and 61.35 , $p_{\text{S}}<.05$ and $.40$, $\eta^2=.54$ and $.40$, respectively. As expected, Chinese participants were less likely to accuse the group of failure than were German participants ($M_{\text{S}}=3.81$ and 4.42 , respectively). For the success situation, more group attributions were made than for the failure situation ($M_{\text{S}}=5.26$ and 4.13 , respectively).

Situation attribution. Both Nation and Situation yielded significant main effects on frequency of situation attribution, $F_{\text{S}}(1,91)=5.47$ and 31.37 , $p_{\text{S}}<.05$ and $.01$, $\eta^2=.05$ and $.26$, respectively. Chinese participants made fewer situation attributions than did German participants ($M_{\text{S}}=3.02$ and 3.59). For the failure situation, more situation attributions were made than for the success situation ($M_{\text{S}}=3.80$ and 2.83 , respectively).

Examining the complete results, the most noteworthy aspect concerns the absolute amount of attributions made by Chinese and German participants. Chinese participants generated fewer attributions for all attribution categories and for all situation types than did German participants. This calls for a cautious data interpretation. For instance, the result which shows that German participants tended to make more situation attributions than did Chinese participants (which was contrary to the hypothesis) may be due to the overall lower rate of Chinese attribution. As a consequence, conclusive statements concerning these issues cannot be made in this study. Why did the Chinese participants generally make fewer attributions than did German participants? Possible explanations will be discussed in the next section.

It is also interesting to note that the ranked patterns of attribution are quite similar: for both German and Chinese respondents, in the success situation, group attribution was ranked highest, followed by self-attribution; in the failure situation, group attribution again received the highest score, followed by self attribution. This indicates that both German and Chinese participants considered group performance as the most powerful factor in the collaboration. The proposition that German participants would be more individually oriented is therefore not supported.

To summarize, the results appeared to be rather mixed, indicating the complexity of attribution. The hypothesis that Chinese were more likely to make internal attribution for failure and external attribution for success whereas Germans were more likely to make internal attribution for success and external attribution for failure was only partially supported. In the same way, the expectation that Chinese tended to make more situational

attributions whereas Germans tended to make more internal attributions were not proved either.

2.3.1.2 Cultural differences in emotion

Were there cross-national differences in emotional responses facing positive and negative outcomes? The same scenario involving success and failure situations as described in section 2.3.1.1 was used to examine this question. A one factor (Nation: Germany vs. China) MANOVA was performed to assess the positive emotions in success situation and negative emotions in failure situation. The factor Situation was not tested because it was not relevant in this case. Results show that there was an effect of the Nation for both the success situation ($F[6,86]=6.62, p<.01, \eta^2=.35$) and the failure situation ($F[5,85]=6.85, p<.01, \eta^2=.36$). Figure 2 reports the results.

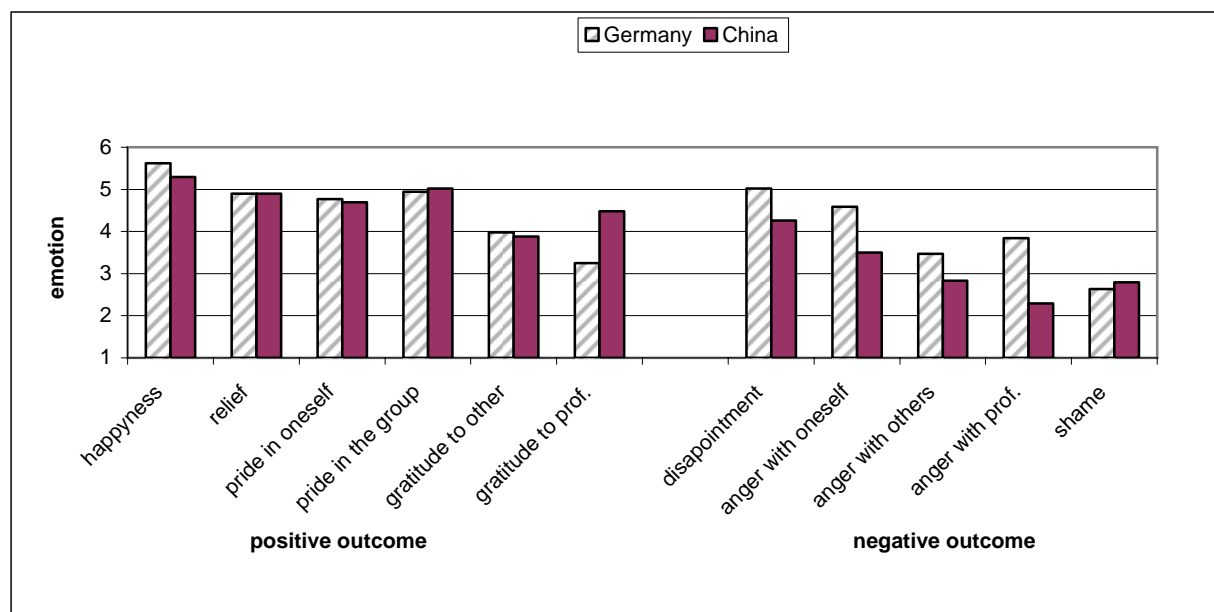


Figure 2. Differences in emotion between Germans and Chinese in situations with positive or negative outcomes

Positive emotion

As can be observed in Figure 2, positive outcomes elicited positive emotions among German and Chinese participants. No cultural difference was found regarding happiness, relief, pride in oneself, pride in the group, and gratitude to other. Only the gratitude to the professor was significantly different: Chinese participants, compared with German

participants, showed considerably more gratitude to the professor who gave their paper the top grade, $M_s=4.48$ and 3.25 , $F(1,92)=19.81$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.18$.

It is interesting to see that while gratitude to other revealed no cultural difference between Germans and Chinese, gratitude to the professor was more pronounced among Chinese respondents. This result suggested that hierarchy orientation and respect for seniors in Chinese culture have a strong impact on the responses of Chinese participants. It is also interesting to note that Chinese participants reported the same amount of pride in oneself, which seemingly was incongruent with the modesty etiquette in Chinese culture. However, given the literature that Chinese are also motivated to self-enhance, especially in achievement situations and in private, it is not surprising that the Chinese participants in this study self-reported being proud of their performances.

Negative emotion

Unlike the results concerning the situation with the positive outcome, the results for the situation with the negative outcome revealed many cultural differences between German and Chinese respondents. Compared with Germans, Chinese participants felt less disappointed ($M_s=4.26$ and 5.02 , $F[1,91]=7.38$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.75$), and perceived less anger with oneself ($M_s=3.50$ and 4.59 , $F[1,91]=13.88$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.13$), with others ($M_s=3.47$ and 2.66 , $F(1,91)=5.88$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.61$), and with the professor ($M_s=3.84$ and 3.13 , $F(1,91)=28.99$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.24$). These results were consistent with previous research reporting that Chinese people are more emotionally restrained and tend to show less emotion, especially negative ones. Particularly the cultural difference in showing anger was found to be highly significant, indicating that whereas German participants were more likely to express their true emotions, Chinese participants avoided showing negative emotions (especially anger) in order to avoid conflicts and to maintain social harmony.

The only one emotion that seemed to be felt to the same extent by Chinese and German participants was shame. Given the overall lower score on emotions of Chinese participants, this result seemingly suggested that shame is strongly perceived by Chinese people, as has also been reported in other studies.

2.3.1.3 Cultural differences in communication

To investigate the communication style of German and Chinese participants in different situations, a scenario with two settings was employed. It reads as follows:

(situation: unimportant)

You and another student are visiting an art exhibition. You dislike the painting, which is, however, the favorite of the other student.

How do you behave?

(situation: important)

You and another student are asked by your professor to complete an assignment. The performance will be graded. You completely disagree with the solution of the other student; you have a totally different idea.

How do you behave?

- Express your opinion directly
- Express your opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases such as “perhaps”, “it could be”...
- Make no comments on the position of the other student
- Suggest asking the professor (an art expert) for his/her opinion

A 2 (Nation: Germany vs. China) \times 2 (Situation: unimportant vs. important), MANOVA with repeated measures (for the factor Situation) was performed to test the dependent variable “communication”. Results showed that there was an effect of the Nation ($F[4,89]=23.25, p<.01, \eta^2=.51$) and an effect of the Situation ($F[4,89]=24.87, p<.01, \eta^2=.53$). The interaction between Nation and Situation was also significant ($F[4,89]=24.87, p<.01, \eta^2=.612$). Figure 3 displays the results.

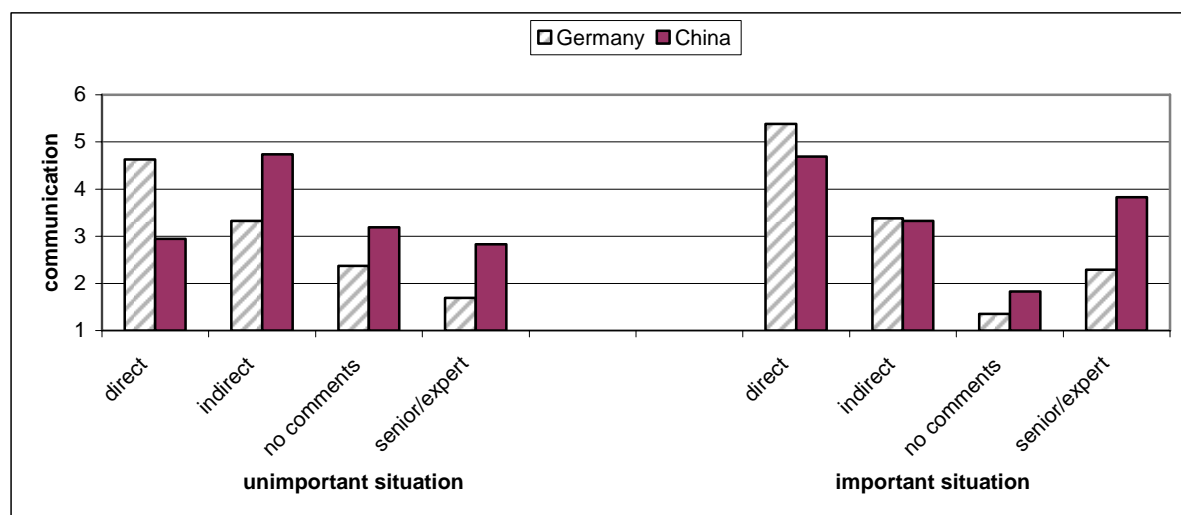


Figure 3. Differences in communication style between Germans and Chinese in unimportant and important situations

Direct communication. The ANOVA on frequency of direct communications revealed significant main effects of Nation and Situation, $F(1,92)=40.74$ and $60.98, p<.01$

and .01, $\eta^2=.31$ and .40, respectively. As expected, Chinese participants used fewer direct communications than did German participants ($M_s=3.82$ and 5.01, respectively). The unimportant situation yielded fewer direct communications than did the important situation ($M_s=3.87$ and 5.08, respectively).

The interaction effect between Nation and Situation was highly significant. Both groups of participants used more direct communications in the important situation than in the unimportant situation, but this difference was more pronounced for the Chinese participants (China: $M_s=4.63$ and 2.95; Germany: $M_s=5.38$ and 4.69), $F(1,92)=9.22$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.09$. This result was consistent with the hypothesis that Chinese participants will communicate more directly in important situations than in unimportant situations due to their tendency to adjust their behavior to situational demands, whereas German participants' behavior will not be much influenced by the situational context.

Indirect communication. Both Nation and Situation yielded significant main effects on indirect communication, $F_s(1,92)=6.02$ and 60.81, $p_s<.05$ and .01, $\eta^2=.06$ and .15, respectively. As expected, Chinese participants used more indirect communications than did German participants ($M_s=4.03$ and 3.34, respectively). The important situation yielded fewer indirect communications than did the unimportant situation ($M_s=3.34$ and 3.97, respectively).

The interaction Nation by Situation was highly significant, $F(1,92)=18.36$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.17$. Chinese participants used much fewer indirect communications in the important situation than in the unimportant situation ($M_s=3.33$ and 4.74), whereas German participants did the opposite: they used slightly more indirect communications in the unimportant situation than in the important situation ($M_s=3.38$ and 3.33).

No comments. The main effects of Nation and Situation were significant, $F_s(1,92)=9.22$ and 50.87, $p_s<.01$ and .01, $\eta^2=.09$ and .36, respectively. As expected, Chinese participants were more likely to avoid making criticism than were German participants ($M_s=2.51$ and 1.86, respectively). In the unimportant situation, both groups of participants made fewer comments than in the important situation ($M_s=2.75$ and 1.56).

Seeking the advice of senior/expert. Both Nation and Situation were significant, $F_s(1,92)=32.47$ and 18.42, $p_s<.01$ and .01, $\eta^2=.26$ and .17, respectively. The Chinese were more likely to seek out and follow the judgments of seniors or experts than were Germans

($M_s=3.33$ and 2.01 , respectively). The unimportant situation led to weaker intention to search for a senior or expert judgment than the important situation ($M_s=2.22$ and 3.00).

To summarize, the results support the hypothesis that Germany and China differed in communication style. In particular, low context communication (direct communication) was employed more often by German participants than by Chinese participants. Furthermore, the Chinese were more hierarchy-oriented in that they attempted to settle a debate by seeking a definite judgment from seniors or experts.

Results also revealed the significant impact of contexts on the directness/ indirectness of Chinese communication. Figure 4 illustrates the contextual effect.

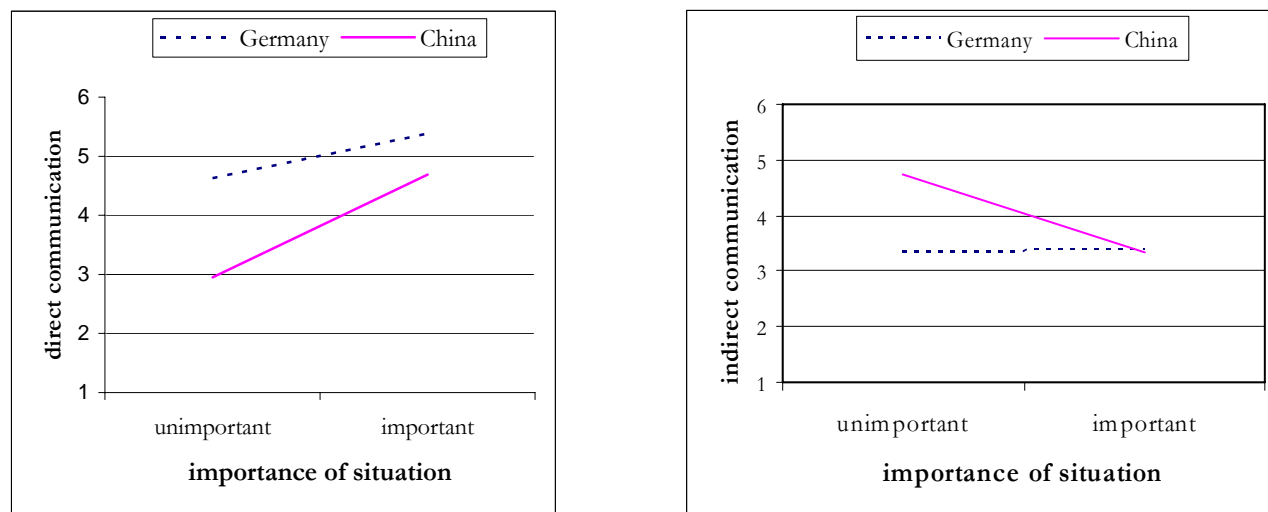


Figure 4. Significant interactions in communication style between culture and situational context

As can be seen from Figure 4, although Chinese participants generally preferred to use a less direct form of communication than did Germans, the difference between these two cultural groups was much smaller in the important situation. Actually, whereas in the unimportant situation, Chinese participants clearly preferred to use the indirect communication, in the important situation, they switched to the direct communication. Chinese respondents appeared to adjust their communication style according to the importance of situations by increasing their directness in the important situation. Thus, it can be inferred that the distinction between unimportant and important situations was crucial in determining the communication behavior of Chinese people.

2.3.1.4 Cultural differences in modesty

A scenario with two situations (important vs. unimportant) was used to examine how much modesty German and Chinese participants would show in these situations. The scenario reads as follows:

(situation: unimportant)

You are praised by your professor for your excellent seminar paper.
How do you behave?

- Express your gratitude and also express your regret that your work still needs improvement

(situation: important)

You are applying for an attractive assistant job which has drawn many applicants.
How do you behave?

- Act highly self-confidently and point out your excellent qualification.

A 2 (Nation: Germany vs. China) \times 2 (Situation: unimportant vs. important), MANOVA with repeated measures (for the factor Situation) was performed. Results showed that there was an effect of the Nation ($F[2,89]=23.25, p<.01, \eta^2=.51$) and an effect of the Situation ($F[2,89]=24.87, p<.01, \eta^2=.53$). The interaction between Nation and Situation was also significant ($F[2,89]=24.87, p<.01, \eta^2=.612$).

The ANOVA showed that modesty was significantly related to the Nation, $F(1,91)=9.45, p<.01, \eta^2=.09$. Chinese participants tended to show more modesty than did Germans ($M_s=3.33$ and 2.76 , respectively).

The analysis also yielded a significant interaction between Nation and Situation, $F(1,91)=10.72, p<.01, \eta^2=.10$ (see Figure 5 and 6). In the unimportant situation, Chinese participants scored significantly higher on modesty than did German participants ($M_s=3.19$ and 1.96). However, in the important situation, Chinese modesty decreased to a great extent, and both Chinese participants and German participants tended to present themselves rather self-confidently than to act modestly.

In sum, the overall results show that, as with the communication style, the importance of the situation largely influenced the response of the Chinese participants, indicating that situational factors play an important role in explaining behaviors of Chinese respondents.

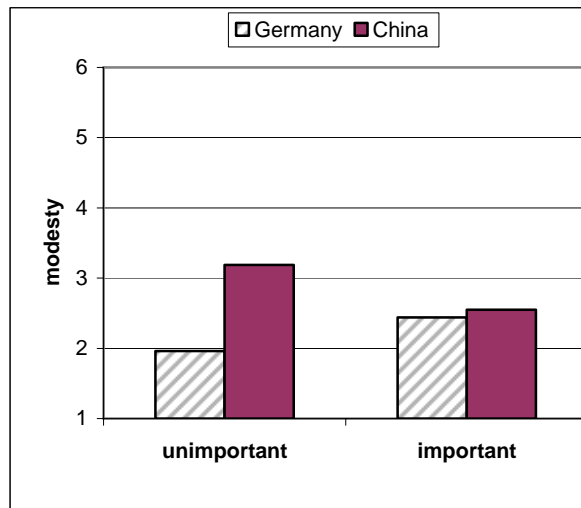


Figure 5. Differences in modesty between Germans and Chinese in unimportant and important situations

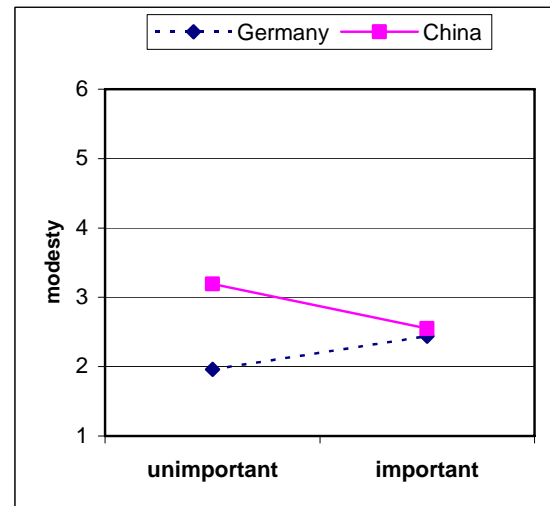


Figure 6. Significant interaction in modesty between culture and situational context

2.3.1.5 Cultural differences in dealing with conflict

Group membership is one of the essential factors influencing social interactions. As revealed in the literature, although people in all cultures generally treat in-group members more favorably than out-group members, Asian people draw an even stronger boundary between in- and out-group than Westerners do (section 1.2).

The scenario “dealing with conflict” included two situations “bike collision with a friend (in-group) vs. with an unknown student (out-group)” examining three variables – calmness (no strong emotional response, remain objective), confrontation (showing anger and dispute), and avoidance (suppressing anger, no dispute). The scenario reads as follows:

(situation: in-group)

Assuming a friend of you carelessly drives his/her bike into you.

How would you behave?

(situation: out-group)

Assuming a student you don't know carelessly drives his/her bike into you.

How would you behave?

- remain calm, consider the situation objectively, and don't get angry
- express anger openly and dispute with him/her
- suppress the anger and avoid disputes

A 2 (Nation: Germany vs. China) \times 2 (Situation: in-group vs. out-group) MANOVA with repeated measures (for the factor Situation) was performed. Results showed that there was an effect of the Nation ($F[3,88]=11.27, p<.01, \eta^2=.39$) and an effect of the Situation ($F[3,88]=13.47, p<.01, \eta^2=.43$). There was no significant interaction between Nation and Situation ($F[3,88]=.71, n.s.$). In the following, results are displayed in Figure 7.

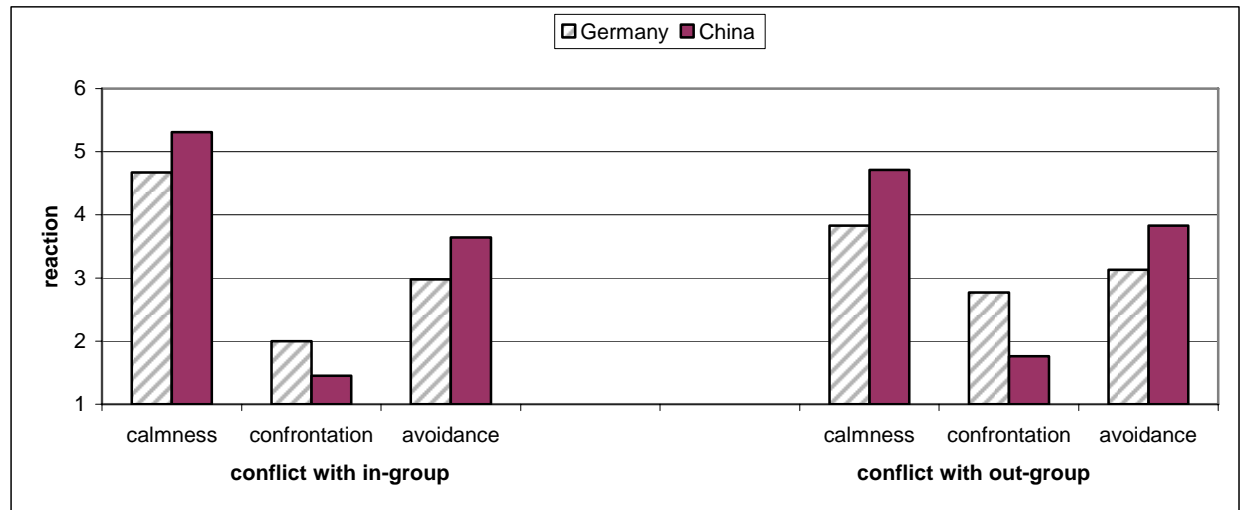


Figure 7. Differences in conflict management between Germans and Chinese in conflicts with in-group members or with out-group members

Calmness. Results revealed significant main effects of Nation and Situation, $F_3(1,92)=11.24$ and $28.53, p<.01$ and $.01, \eta^2=.11$ and $.24$, respectively. As expected, Chinese participants tended to remain calmer than did German participants ($M_s=5.01$ and 4.24 , respectively). Conflicts with in-group members elicited less anger than conflicts with out-group members ($M_s=4.96$ and 4.22).

Confrontation. Main effects of Nation and Situation were found to be significant, $F_3(1,92)=15.09$ and $18.60, p<.01$ and $.01, \eta^2=.14$ and $.17$, respectively. As hypothesized, Chinese were less likely to express their anger overtly or to dispute with others than Germans ($M_s=1.61$ and 2.39 , respectively). In conflicts with in-group members there was less anger and fewer disputes than in conflicts with out-group members ($M_s=1.72$ and 2.32).

Avoidance. The main effect of Nation was found to be significant, $F(1,92)=6.17, p<.05, \eta^2=.06$. Chinese participants made more effort to avoid conflicts than did German participants ($M_s=3.73$ and 3.05 , respectively).

Put together, these results generally support the hypotheses that the Chinese would tend to avoid overt confrontation, and show less strong negative emotions. German participants, compared with the Chinese, suppressed their emotions to a lesser degree, and were more likely to use confrontation. However, the ranked patterns of conflict behaviors between the two countries were quite similar: For both German and Chinese participants, confrontation was the least preferred way in dealing with conflicts. Both groups of students tended to choose emotionally controlled responses, like calmness.

Contrary to the prediction, Chinese participants did not make greater distinctions between in- and out-group as compared with German participants. Both groups of students treated in-group members more favorably than out-group members to the same degree. This finding will be discussed in section 2.4.

2.3.2 Comparison of Self- and Cross-Cultural Perceptions

In the preceding section, results concerning self-perception are displayed. In this section, we reports the results of the comparison of self- and cross-cultural perceptions.

To examine cross-cultural perception, the same scenarios were used, with the variation that respondents were exchange students who were asked how the host nationals would behave in the situation. Below is an example drawn from the questionnaire for German exchange students.

Cross-cultural perception of Chinese communication (questionnaire for the German exchange students)

You and a Chinese student are visiting an art exhibition. The Chinese student dislikes the painting, which is, however, your favorite.
How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

To examine how much cross-cultural perception diverged from self-perception, the predictions made by the exchange students concerning the behavioral tendencies of the host nationals were compared with the self-reported behavior of local students. Specifically, we compared German exchange students' cross-cultural predictions for Chinese local students with Chinese local students' self-descriptions, and Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural predictions for German local students with German local students' self-descriptions.

2.3.2.1 Self-perception vs. cross-cultural perception of attribution

For each cultural group (Germans vs. Chinese) and each situation (success vs. failure) a one-factor (Perception: self vs. cross-cultural) MANOVA was conducted respectively. Table 3 shows the results.

	Situation	Type of attribution	Self-perception	Cross-cultural perception
Germans	success	Self	3.33	3.21
	...	Other *	2.96	2.51
	...	Group **	5.35	4.87
	...	Situation *	3.08	2.47
	failure	Self	3.41	3.13
	...	Other *	3.49	2.91
	...	Group **	4.41	3.53
	...	Situation	4.08	3.85
Chinese	success	Self	2.76	3.14
	...	Other **	2.60	3.38
	...	Group	5.14	4.54
	...	Situation **	2.57	3.70
	failure	Self *	3.36	4.00
	...	Other *	2.48	3.00
	...	Group	3.86	3.57
	...	Situation	3.45	3.73

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3. Differences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions of attribution

Note: The numbers in the table are mean scores; they range from 1 (not unlikely) to 6 (most likely)

German students' self-perception vs. Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Germans

Results of the MANOVA showed that for both success and failure situations, there was a main effect of the Perception, $F_{(11,86)}=3.77$ and 5.62 , $p < .01$ and $.01$, $\eta^2=.32$ and $.42$, respectively. A calculation of ANOVAs revealed that in the success situation, there were significant differences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions for other attribution ($F[1,97]=4.07$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2=.40$), group attribution ($F[1,97]=8.02$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2=.76$), and situation attribution ($F[1,97]=5.50$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2=.76$). In the failure situation, differences in other attribution ($F[1,97]=5.46$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2=.54$) and group attribution ($F[1,97]=10.82$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2=.10$) were significant.

Overall, Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural rating on attribution was lower than the German students' self-perception. Considering our prior finding showing that Chinese

respondents have generally made fewer attributions in all situations, the present results seem to reveal some degree of egocentrism of Chinese exchange students in estimating the behavior of their host nationals: they assumed that Germans would also make fewer attributions in all situations – just as they do themselves.

Interestingly, unlike their ratings on other, group, and situation attribution, Chinese students' cross-cultural perception of Germans' self-attribution was congruent with German students' self-perception. This result suggests that by rating self attribution, Chinese participants made their estimations on the basis of stereotype they hold of Westerners; that is, Germans are individual and self-oriented, and are therefore more likely to make internal attribution.

Chinese students' self-perception vs. German exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Chinese

The main effect of Perception was found to be significant in both success and failure situations ($F_{s[10,68]}=3.17$ and 4.89 , $p_s<.01$ and $.01$, $\eta^2=.32$ and $.45$, respectively). In the success situation, differences in other attribution ($F[1,77]=8.23$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.97$) and group attribution ($F[1,77]=8.46$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.99$) were significant. German exchange students overestimated the Chinese propensity to attribute success to others and to group. This overestimation may reveal the generally held belief by the Germans that Chinese people are group-oriented.

The results for the failure situation were puzzling because both self-attribution ($F[1,77]=4.42$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.54$) and other attribution ($F[1,77]=4.59$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.06$) were significant. German exchange students predicted more self and other attributions of Chinese students than did Chinese of themselves. This may be due to the overall lower rate of Chinese self-reported attribution. However, results regarding group and situation attributions revealed no divergence between self- and cross-cultural perceptions. Altogether, the answering pattern is rather mixed and allows no easy interpretation.

2.3.2.2 Self-perception vs. cross-cultural perception of emotion

For each cultural group and each situation a one-factor (Perception: self vs. cross-cultural) MANOVA was applied.

In predicting emotional responses in situations with the *positive* outcome, there was no significant difference between self- and cross-cultural perceptions in both German and Chinese data, which suggests that positive emotions (such as happiness, pride) might be more overtly shown in both cultures, and therefore could be estimated more correctly.

For the situation with the *negative* outcome, a significant main effect of Perception was found for German data ($F[10,86]=5.62$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.42$) and Chinese data ($F[10,67]=4.89$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.46$). Table 4 displays the results.

	Situation	Emotion	Self-perception	Cross-cultural perception
Germans	Negative outcome	Disappointment **	5.02	4.04
		Anger with oneself**	4.59	2.74
		Anger with others**	3.47	2.66
		Anger with professor*	3.84	3.13
		Shame	2.63	2.55
Chinese	Negative outcome	Disappointment**	4.26	5.08
		Anger with oneself**	3.50	4.49
		Anger with others	2.83	3.38
		Anger with professor**	2.29	3.54
		Shame**	2.79	4.65

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Table 4. Differences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions of negative emotions

German students' self-perception vs. Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Germans

A calculation of ANOVAs revealed that most of the cross-cultural perceptions were inconsistent with the self-perceptions. Except for shame, Chinese exchange students perceived Germans to be more emotionally controlled than German students perceived themselves to be. Chinese students believed Germans would show less disappointment ($F[1,96]=11.87$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.11$), less anger with oneself ($F[1,96]=44.02$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.31$), less anger with others ($F[1,96]=9.35$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.89$), and less anger with professor ($F[1,96]=5.72$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.56$) than did German respondents. It seems that whereas Germans self-reported having greater anger, Chinese exchange students obviously did not get the same impression.

Chinese students' self-perception vs. German exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Chinese

With regard to Chinese data, except for anger with others, German exchange students perceived the Chinese to be less emotionally controlled than Chinese students believed themselves to be. In the eyes of German exchange students, the Chinese would show more disappointment ($F[1,77]=8.41$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.98$), more anger with oneself ($F[1,77]=9.76$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.62$), and more anger with professor ($F[1,77]=13.42$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.15$).

Another noteworthy finding concerned shame: whereas Chinese participants did not report feeling much ashamed in the given situation, German exchange students perceived the Chinese to be very sensitive to shame ($F[1,77]=33.37$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.30$). The cross-cultural perception of German participants supports previous literature which claims that shame is strongly felt in Asian cultures. It is interesting that Chinese participants in this study did not self-report a stronger shame, which may reveal the different understanding of the term shame.

2.3.2.3 Self-perception vs. cross-cultural perception of communication style

Which communication style do Germans and Chinese students prefer in the given situations, and how do the exchange students actually perceive the communication with their host nationals? Table 5 presents the results.

	Situation	Communication style	Self-perception	Cross-cultural perception
Germans	unimportant	direct	4.63	4.85
	...	indirect	3.33	3.13
	...	no comment	2.37	2.47
	...	seeking advice of senior/expert**	1.69	2.83
	important	direct	5.38	5.23
	...	indirect	3.38	2.94
	...	no comment**	1.35	1.87
	...	seeking advice of senior/expert**	2.29	3.23
Chinese	unimportant	direct	2.95	2.70
	...	indirect	4.27	4.27
	...	no comment	3.19	3.89
	...	seeking advice of senior/expert*	2.83	1.95

important	direct**	4.69	3.46
...	indirect**	3.33	4.30
...	no comment*	1.83	2.65
...	seeking advice of senior/expert	3.83	3.19

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 5. Differences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions of communication styles

German students' self-perception vs. Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Germans

The MANOVA displayed a main effect of Perception in both unimportant situation ($F[4,94]=3.35, p<.05, \eta^2=.13$) and important situation ($F[4,94]=4.86, p<.01, \eta^2=.21$). As can be observed in Table 5, in the important situation, Chinese exchange students overestimated German participants' tendency to make comments ($F[1,97]=.69, p<.05, \eta^2=.80$). The effect of the variable "consulting of a senior/expert" was strong. In both situations, Chinese participants assumed that Germans would seek the advice of a senior/expert than Germans did in reality ($F[1,97]=13.44, p<.01, \eta^2=.12$ in unimportant situation; $F[1,97]=8.88, p<.01, \eta^2=.84$ in important situation). This result probably revealed a kind of projection of Chinese hierarchy orientation to the behaviors of Germans.

Chinese students' self-perception vs. German exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Chinese

There was a significant effect of Perception in both unimportant situation ($F[4,74]=.46, p<.05, \eta^2=.14$) and important situation ($F[4,74]=5.92, p<.01, \eta^2=.29$). German exchange students' cross-cultural perception of their Chinese host nationals was quite accurate in the unimportant situation. Except for seeking the advice of a senior/expert ($F[1,77]=6.56, p<.05, \eta^2=.79$), the prediction of the high-context communication of Chinese people was consistent with the communication style as reported by the Chinese.

However, in the important situation, German respondents were seemingly unaware that Chinese communication has shifted in the direction of the low-context style: the Chinese have become more direct ($F[1,77]=14.51, p<.01, \eta^2=.16$), less indirect ($F[1,77]=7.60, p<.01, \eta^2=.09$), and more ready to make comments ($F[1,77]=6.36, p<.05, \eta^2=.08$). Only the hierarchy orientation of the Chinese respondents persisted.

2.3.2.4 Self-perception vs. cross-cultural perception of modesty

An ANOVA was applied to compare self- und cross-cultural perceptions of modesty. Results revealed that the divergences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions turned out to be considerably large. As can be observed in Table 6, both German and Chinese exchange students based their predictions on stereotypes: the Chinese considered Germans to be less modest than Germans perceived themselves to be ($F[1,97]=5.62, p<.05, \eta^2=.05$); Germans followed the common belief that Chinese people are humble and self-effacing ($F[1,77]=8.45, p<.01, \eta^2=.10$).

	Situation	Modesty	Self-perception	Cross-cultural perception
Germans	unimportant	Modesty*	1.96	1.47
	important	Modesty**	2.44	1.40
Chinese	unimportant	Modesty**	3.19	4.16
	important	Modesty**	2.55	3.64

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Table 6. Differences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions of modesty

2.3.2.5 Self-perception vs. cross-cultural perception of conflict management

Table 7 shows the self- und cross-cultural perceptions of conflict management.

	Situation	Conflict management	Self-perception	Cross-cultural perception
Germans	In-group	calmness	4.67	4.77
	...	confrontation	2.00	2.11
	...	avoidance	2.98	3.40
	Out-group	calmness	3.83	4.40
	...	confrontation	2.77	2.68
	...	avoidance	3.13	3.30
Chinese	In-group	calmness*	5.31	4.73
	...	confrontation	1.45	1.91
	...	avoidance	4.05	3.64
	Out-group	calmness**	4.17	3.19
	...	confrontation**	3.00	1.76
	...	avoidance	3.83	3.92

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

Table 7. Differences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions of conflict management

German students' self-perception vs. Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Germans

No significant effect of Perception was found in both in- and out-group situations. As can be seen in Table 7, Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perceptions of conflict behaviors of Germans were in congruence with German local students' self-perception. Therefore, the predictions of Chinese participants on Germans' conflict behavior were quite accurate.

Chinese students' self-perception vs. German exchange students' cross-cultural perception of Chinese

There was a significant effect of Perception for the in-group situation ($F[3,73]=10.00$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.41$) and the out-group situation ($F[3,73]=14.09$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.49$). Inconsistences between self- and cross-cultural perceptions occurred as the German exchange students perceived the Chinese to be less emotionally controlled than the Chinese reported themselves to be ($F[1,77]=5.77$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.70$ in the in-group situation; $F[1,77]=24.42$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.24$ in the out-group situation). Moreover, German exchange students underrated the propensity of the Chinese people to be confrontational when facing an out-group member ($F[1,77]=20.43$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.21$).

2.3.3 Cultural Differences Reported in the Literature vs. Cultural Differences Experienced by the Exchange Students

To examine the current cultural differences between Germany and China in the context of academic life of exchange students, the participants were requested to rate on a 6-point scale to which extent the cultural differences as reported in the literature were coherent with their personal experiences in their host countries. In the statistical analysis, we explored level of coherence between the reported and the perceived cultural differences by testing whether the participants' ratings were significantly higher than the reference value 3.50, which is the middle of the 6-point scale. A T-test was computed, with significant results indicating that the mentioned cultural difference was confirmed by the exchange students.

In the following, Table 8 presents the results showing how the German exchange students have perceived the Chinese culture.

	MEAN	SD	T	P
Pragmatic choice of academic study	4.74	1.29	5.70	<.01
Indirect expression of refusals	4.73	1.22	6.15	<.01
High face concern	4.57	1.28	5.07	<.01
Importance of social network	4.46	1.39	4.21	<.01
Promises not necessarily meant	4.30	1.20	4.05	<.01
Less planning, more flexibility,	4.22	1.65	2.64	<.05
Indirect communication	4.11	1.71	2.16	<.05
Avoidance of conflict	4.08	1.46	2.42	<.05
Less discussion in classroom	3.70	1.71	.72	n.s.
Highly structured academic study	3.51	1.71	.48	n.s.
reference value	3.50			
High hierarchy at university	3.38	1.55	-	-
Indirect information-presentation	3.32	1.27	-	-
Restrained emotional expression	2.94	1.62	-	-

Table 8. Cultural differences perceived by the German exchange students with regard to Chinese cultural characteristics (1=not at all, 6=very much)

As can be seen in Table 8, three statements received ratings below the reference value 3.5 (strict hierarchy at the university, indirect information presentation, and restrained emotional expression), and two ratings (highly structured academic study, and unwillingness to engage in discussions) were not significant, indicating that these five statements concerning Chinese cultural characteristics could not be supported.

The following statements reached statistical significance showing that they were confirmed by the participants: pragmatism in choosing a course of academic study; high face concern; some aspects of low-context communication, e.g. indirect communication (double meanings); indirect expression of refusal; the not “true” promise (promises are often not kept because they are only given to keep harmony on the surface); and the avoidance of conflict.

The overall finding is noteworthy, because many Chinese cultural characteristics which have been reported in the literature were not confirmed by the German exchange students who were currently living in China. Furthermore, standard deviation was high for most of the statements, and the range of scores was quite wide, indicating that the answers of the respondents were considerably heterogeneous: whereas some of the students perceived the given Chinese cultural characteristics exactly as they were described, others had different experiences. The results indicate the complexity of Chinese culture. Discussions about the potential reasons for this result are presented in section 2.4.

Next, Table 9 below displays how the Chinese exchange students have perceived the German culture.

	MEAN	SD	T	P
Less hierarchy at university	4.49	1.14	5.79	<.01
Direct conflict confrontation	4.43	1.10	5.85	<.01
Direct expression of refusal	4.43	1.26	6.59	<.01
Direct communication	4.26	1.29	5.02	<.01
More discussion in classroom	4.21	1.27	3.98	<.01
Direct information-presentation	4.21	1.40	5.21	<.01
Less importance of social network	4.15	1.34	4.14	<.01
Internally motivated choice of academic study	4.02	1.41	2.99	<.05
True promises: “meant as said”	3.96	1.47	2.24	<.05
More planning, less flexibility	3.91	1.43	2.33	<.05
Less face concern	3.87	1.36	2.19	<.05
Less structured academic study	3.81	1.38	1.71	n.s
Direct expression of negative emotion	3.67	1.43	1.02	n.s.

Table 9. Cultural differences perceived by the Chinese exchange students with regard to German cultural characteristics (1=not at all, 6= very much)

Results show that most of German cultural characteristics were agreed on by the Chinese exchange students. These were: less strict hierarchy; low-context communication, including direct conflict confrontation, direct expression of refusal, promises “meant as said”, and direct information presentation; many discussions in class; less emphasis on one’s social network; internally motivated choice of academic study; more planning and role-orientation; and less face concern.

The two German cultural characteristics which were not confirmed were: less structured academic study and direct expression of (negative) emotion. Especially the statement regarding the direct emotional expression of Germans was scored relatively low by Chinese respondents, indicating that they actually perceived Germans to be emotionally controlled by not showing much negative emotion.

2.3.4 Problems/Difficulties while Studying Abroad

To examine whether cultural differences between Germany and China may have led to cross-cultural difficulties during study abroad, the exchange students were asked to rate the

severity of the difficulties they perceived on a 6-point scale. Similar to the statistic analysis of the perceived cultural differences, we explored level of perceived cross-cultural difficulties by testing whether the participants' ratings were significantly higher than the reference value 3.5. A T-test was performed, with significant results indicating that cross-cultural difficulties exist. Results are presented in Table 10 (German exchange students' data) and Table 11 (Chinese exchange students' data).

	MEAN	SD	T	<i>p</i>
Promises not necessarily kept	4.18	1.34	2.70	<.05
Less planning	3.65	1.62	.48	n.s.
Indirect information presentation	3.64	1.40	.38	n.s.
Indirect communication	3.64	1.22	.57	n.s.
Less discussion in the classroom	3.57	1.69	.19	n.s.
High face concern	3.27	1.39	-	-
Indirect expression of refusal	3.03	1.25	-	-
Importance of social network	2.96	1.73	-	-
Avoidance of conflict	2.96	1.33	-	-
Highly structured academic study	2.88	1.67	-	-
Restrained emotional expression	2.77	1.42	-	-
Pragmatic choice of academic study	2.75	1.75	-	-
Strict hierarchy at university	2.58	1.31	-	-

Table 10. Perceived difficulties of German exchange students in China due to cultural differences (1=not problematic at all, 6= very problematic)

	MEAN	SD	T	<i>p</i>
Direct emotional expression	2.46	1.22	-	-
More planning, less flexibility	2.45	1.28	-	-
More discussion in classroom	2.44	1.37	-	-
Direct expression of refusal	2.37	1.46	-	-
Less hierarchy at university	2.37	1.36	-	-
Direct communication	2.35	1.15	-	-
Direct conflict confrontation	2.14	1.00	-	-
Less importance of social Network	2.09	1.28	-	-
Direct information presentation	1.94	.89	-	-
Less structured academic study	1.89	1.20	-	-
Internal motivated choice of academic study	1.85	1.03	-	-
Less face concern	1.82	1.02	-	-
Promises strictly kept	1.55	.77	-	-

Table 11. Perceived difficulties of Chinese exchange students in Germany due to cultural differences (1=not problematic at all, 6= very problematic)

Examining Table 10 and Table 11, one can clearly see that – contrary to our expectations – both German and Chinese exchange students reported having had very few difficulties due to cultural differences between these two countries. Actually, only one statement became statistically significant, namely that German exchange students perceived the Chinese “not keeping promises” to be problematic for them: they felt uncertain not knowing exactly whether the promise was made sincerely or merely for the sake of surface harmony. By looking at the data of the Chinese sample, the ratings were even all below the reference value 3.5. These fairly low scores seem to suggest that the Chinese participants were getting along well with German culture absolutely and the large cultural differences between China and Germany led to no problems at all.

The apparent absence of cross-cultural difficulties is very surprising, because it is inconsistent with many previous empirical findings reporting serious adjustment problems of international students (a literature review on cross-cultural adjustment of international students is presented in chapter 3). How could this be the case? Explanations from methodological and empirical perspectives are offered in section 2.4 and chapter 3.

2.4 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In this section, the results of the current study will be discussed, and conclusions will be drawn. Subsection 2.4.1 provides a summary of the cultural differences between Germany and China found in this study. Following this, subsection 2.4.2 presents an overview of how cross-cultural perception diverged (or converged) from self-perception, and analyzes the underlying reasons. Subsection 2.4.3 goes on to compare German and Chinese culture characteristics as reported in the literature and as perceived by the exchange students. Next, subsection 2.4.4 looks in detail at what difficulties German and Chinese exchange students reported facing. In subsection 2.4.5, a discussion of various issues was made concerning the implementation of cross-cultural research and the limitations of the present study.

2.4.1 Cultural Differences between Germany and China

In the following, results regarding cultural differences between Germany and China in attribution, emotion, and communication will be discussed.

Attribution

It is commonly concluded that Westerners tend to overemphasize internal disposition, whereas East Asians refer more to situational factors when explaining people's behavior. Yet recent research has revealed that attribution is context-specific and cannot be explained by a simple distinction of internal-situational attribution. For example, Westerns tend to make internal attribution for success and external attribution for failure, whereas Chinese people do the opposite.

The current study examined attributions made by German and Chinese participants for success and failure. The results were rather mixed, reflecting the complex nature of attribution. With regard to *internal attribution*, no cultural difference was found between German and Chinese participants for both success and failure attribution. This finding did not support our expectation that Chinese participants were more likely to make internal attribution for failure than were German participants. This finding also provided no support for the assumption that German participants, with their more individualistic cultural background, were more likely to attribute their success to their own ability. With regard to *situation attribution*, contrary to the hypothesis, Chinese participants made fewer situational attributions than did German participants in both success and failure situations. Also, Chinese participants made fewer *other attributions* than did German participants. The one result which was consistent with the hypothesis concerned the *group attribution*. As expected, compared to Germans, the Chinese less frequently blamed the group for failure. Interestingly, the pattern of group attribution for failure and for success was the same between Chinese and German participants: both groups ranked the group as the most important factor for the outcome. This finding suggested an emphasis on group performance by participants in both cultures.

One eye-catching effect in the study was that Chinese participants made overall fewer attributions for all attribution categories (self, situation, other, group) and for all situations (success and failure). This pattern calls for caution in interpreting the results. For example, the surprising finding of the Chinese making fewer situation and other attributions than Germans may be due to the Chinese' overall lower score on attribution. But why did Chinese participants, as compared to German participants, generally make fewer attributions?

One possibility concerns the cultural response style. It was possible that Chinese respondents were more likely to use the lower response categories of the scales. Yet by

looking at other scores in the questionnaire in the current study, it is clear that Chinese participants' response pattern was "normal" elsewhere. Therefore, the assumption concerning the response bias can be ruled out.

A more plausible explanation is related to the Chinese emphasis on context. The Chinese may find it difficult to make judgments about social interactions without specifying a particular social context. Although scenarios used in this study have provided a concrete social interaction, they were relatively short descriptions. As revealed in the follow-up interviews with some of the Chinese participants, it seemed that Chinese participants felt hesitant to make any definite comments without receiving more detailed information about the setting:

I need more information: has the other student tried his or her best to complete the task? Is it our first time working together? And, have I myself done a better job than him/her?

In sum, the obtained results in this study may be the result of several different processes. Because of these and other confounding factors, no definite conclusion can be reached about cross-cultural comparisons of German and Chinese attribution. There are good reasons to expect people from individualistic and collectivist cultures to systematically differ in preferred attributions. However, the precise pattern of these differences is hard to predict and is almost certainly more complex than can be captured by the simple dispositional-situational dichotomy. To characterize attributions and attributional styles adequately requires measuring instruments that avoid confounding causal dimensions, actors, or event domains. Especially by examining Chinese attribution style, one must clearly define the situational contexts. In short, the question of Chinese attribution is still open to further research, and requires better conceived studies that are free from invalidating factors.

Emotion

The results of the study displayed a similar pattern among German and Chinese respondents concerning causes of emotion and emotional reactions: a positive outcome elicited positive emotions and negative outcome elicited negative emotions. The present study therefore supports the cross-cultural generality of attribution-emotion linkages.

Differences between German and Chinese participants were found in the emotional responses to the negative situation (failure). As expected, Chinese participants were more

emotionally restrained than German participants, and they showed less disappointment, less anger with themselves, and less anger with others. Especially the expression of anger with others was shown to have a large cultural difference. Whereas Chinese participants took efforts to control their anger, German participants tended to show their true emotions. This finding was consistent with previous research indicating the stronger emotional “display rules” in Asian countries.

On the other hand, inconsistent with our expectation, no cultural difference was found on the emotional responses with regard to the positive situation (success). Chinese participants reported the same degree of happiness, relief, pride in oneself, and pride in the group as did the German participants. It is not surprising that Chinese respondents declared pride in the group because prizing collective performance is encouraged in China. It is also plausible to assume that joy may bring people together; therefore, the Chinese respondents have not avoided showing happiness. Noteworthy was that Chinese participants also showed their pride in themselves, which seemingly was inconsistent with the Chinese emphasis on modesty. This result can probably be attributed to the fact that the need for self-enhancement is universal (e.g. Anderson, 1999; Murakami & Yamaguchi, 2000), and the Chinese are more likely to show self-enhancement in an anonymous situation than in a situation where they are identifiable (e.g. Bond, Leung & Wan, 1982).

The results also provided evidence for the Chinese hierarchy orientation and face concern. Compared with German participants, Chinese participants reported far more gratitude to their superior (not yet to the other student) for success, and felt more ashamed facing failure.

Communication

It is commonly agreed that German communication follows a typically low-context style, whereas Chinese communication is typically high-context communication (e.g. Bond, 1996; Thomas & Schenk, 2005). The current study extended previous research by comparing the communication in varied situational contexts, specifically in unimportant situation and in important situation, so as to identify the possible situational effect.

In the context of the *unimportant* situation, results revealed a rather robust effect on cross-cultural difference in communication: Chinese participants used more high-context communication than did German participants. However, in the context of the *important* situation, no cultural difference was found among Chinese and German participants. In

other words, Chinese participants reduced their indirectness and tended to make things clear by using direct communication in the important situation. This finding demonstrated the strong impact of situational context in determining Chinese communication behavior: How much information is explicitly and clearly expressed varies depending upon the situation, and the Chinese attempt to adjust their communication style according to the demands of the situation. The following quote from an interview with one Chinese participant illustrated this point:

I do feel uncomfortable speaking directly and being assertive, but I cannot afford to fail in this situation.

Additionally, the result reflects the Chinese hierarchy orientation in settling disagreement. Chinese participants were more likely to seek out a settlement by their superiors or to follow the judgments of an expert than were German participants.

Modesty

Chinese society values modesty because modesty can enhance group harmony (e.g. Bond, 1996; Thomas, 2003). On the other hand, it has been shown that Chinese also engage in self-enhancement behaviors, especially in performance situations and in private (e.g. Falbo, Poston, Triscari & Zhang, 1997; Wan & Bond, 1982). The present study reconciled the above findings by examining modesty behavior in two settings of varying importance.

In the *unimportant* situation, Chinese participants clearly showed more modesty than did German participants. However, the observed cultural difference virtually vanished in the *important* situation. In this situation, Chinese participants reduced their modesty to a large degree, and both Chinese and Germans choose to behave more self-confidently.

Together with the findings concerning communication style, this study was able to show that perceived situational importance is a crucial factor influencing Chinese behavior. The findings also reflected the relational and contextualized aspects of the Self in Asian culture: The Chinese participants were more willing to change their behaviors across situations to produce socially appropriate actions and to meet the demands of the situation than were German participants.

Conflict with in-group and out-group members

Chinese people usually try to avoid conflict as much as possible by using avoidance and non-confrontational strategies (e.g. Gao, Ting-Tommy & Gudykunst, 1996), whereas Germans view argumentation as an effective way to settle conflicts and thus do not sidestep confrontation (e.g. Schroll-Machl, 2003). Group membership is also a factor influencing conflict management. It was reported that compared with Westerners, the Chinese are more likely to engage in conflict with a stranger (out-group) than with a friend (in-group) (Leung, 1988).

Results of this study reflected the Chinese-German difference in conflict management: Chinese participants were more emotionally controlled, used more avoidance, and tried harder to avoid direct confrontation than the German participants.

However, contrary to our expectation, Chinese participants did not make a stronger in-group/out-group distinction than did German students. Several explanations are possible. First, the counterpart in the given conflict situation was a student in the same university; therefore, this student might still be viewed as an in-group member. Second, the situation in the scenario might not have been considered “important” enough for the Chinese participants to risk a confrontation. And finally, as Leung (1997) argues, Chinese people attend to two principal concerns relating to conflict: animosity reduction and disintegration avoidance. Within the in-group, a primary concern is to avoid disintegration of the relationship. Consequently, tactical avoidance and face-saving behaviors are engaged. With the out-group, concern for others is lower, but the risk of animosity is much higher. Therefore, the Chinese prefer to use more compromising and collaborative behaviors in this kind of interaction.

All in all, Chinese conflict management is a multifaceted construct and is more nuanced than that of Germans; the group membership is only one of the influential factors.

2.4.2 Divergence and Convergence between Self- and Cross-Cultural Perceptions

It is important to examine the divergence and convergence between self- and cross-cultural perceptions, because the perceptions influence the way human beings process information and consequently affect inter-group interactions substantially. For example, stereotypes create expectations and one may invariably try to confirm these expectations by

noticing and emphasizing only that information which is in accordance with the expectations. Accurate perception is therefore essential for effective inter-group interactions.

In the following the most important findings in this study are summarized.

Attribution

Chinese exchange students predicted that German local students would be less likely to make *group* and *situation* attributions. The Chinese raters showed in this point some degree of egocentrism: They projected their own cultural logic onto the Germans (Chinese students themselves scored overall low on the attribution scale). With regard to *self* attribution, Chinese students stuck to the stereotypical picture of individualistic Westerners. They believed that Germans would make more internal attributions than the German participants actually did.

German exchange students' prediction of Chinese attribution is generally based on the stereotype that the Chinese are group-oriented. Therefore, German participants overestimated the tendency of Chinese students to attribute success to others and to the situation.

Examining the whole data, the results concerning self- and cross-cultural perceptions of attribution appeared to be mixed; no consistent pattern emerged across single attribution categories or across situations. The results again revealed the complexity of attribution, as has been observed in the comparison of German and Chinese attribution style.

Emotion

The self- and cross-cultural perceptions of German and Chinese participants were quite similar for predictions regarding *positive emotions*. Both groups of participants agreed that following positive outcomes, positive emotional expression would emerge. This congruence was probably due to relatively overt expressions of positive emotions in both cultures. On the other hand, both German and Chinese cross-cultural perceptions of *negative emotions* were more or less contrary to the self-perceptions of the local nationals. Chinese exchange students perceived Germans to be rather emotionally controlled although it was assumed that Germans, due to their individualistic orientation, were likely to express their emotions openly; German exchange students perceived the Chinese to be less emotionally controlled as the Chinese believed themselves to be.

The results regarding negative emotions are both interesting and surprising. It raises a general question: Are the large divergences in prediction of negative emotions the result of biased cross-cultural perceptions due to egocentrism and stereotype, or do they indeed mirror reality to some extent? As disclosed in the follow-up interviews, many German exchange students have experienced many situations in which the Chinese were not quiet and peaceful, and many Chinese exchange students had the impression that Germans were very friendly and emotionally restrained. To account for the German exchange students' observation that the Chinese do often dispute vigorously, it should be noted that most of these disputes took place between strangers. As indicated in the literature, Chinese interaction with out-group members can be quite impersonal or harsh (e.g. Ting-Toomey, 1988). Regarding the Chinese impression that Germans also control their negative emotions, it is plausible that this is due to the way German local students treat the Chinese guest students. As Schroll-Machl (2003) reported, as hosts, Germans can be very friendly, positive and polite.

In a word, the cross-cultural perceptions made by German and Chinese sojourners reflect to a large degree the real social practices of their respective host countries. However, it should be pointed out that this convergence between prediction and real social practices is restricted to certain situational contexts.

Communication

German communication style is typically characterized as direct, objective, and explicit. This view was shared by the Chinese exchange students as well; and there is a consistence between self- and cross-cultural perceptions.

The Chinese are considered to be indirect, face-conscious, and evasive in social interactions. This stereotypical picture of the Chinese apparently has provided the basis for the German exchange students' judgments about Chinese communication. In an unimportant situation, this judgment was congruent with the self-perception of Chinese local students. In an important situation, however, the stereotypical prediction of Chinese behavior did not fit the Chinese social practices. In fact, the Chinese tend to adjust their communication style to the varying situations. In an unimportant situation, they remain polite and indirect; in an important situation, however, the Chinese increase their directness.

The research finding concerning communication style is a clear example of the situation-dependency of Chinese behavior. To understand how Chinese communication is affected and guided by certain rules requires therefore not only a general knowledge of the global position of Chinese communication, but also a specific examination and analysis of situational contexts.

Modesty

As mentioned earlier, the stereotype holds that Germans are competitive and self-assured, and the Chinese are humble and polite. Cross-cultural predictions of both German and Chinese exchange students reflected these stereotypes. Chinese exchange students considered Germans to be less modest than the German students perceived themselves to be, and German exchange students believed the Chinese to be overall modest without considering situational effect. Actually, although Chinese participants displayed considerable modesty in an unimportant situation, in an important situation they reduced their modesty to a great extent.

Conflict management

Chinese exchange students' cross-cultural perceptions of German conflict behavior were in congruence with German local students' self-perceptions. Both groups of participants predicted Germans to be direct, task-focused, and confrontational when dealing with conflicts.

The German exchange students' cross-cultural perceptions of Chinese conflict management were rather mixed. On the one hand, with regard to in-group conflicts, they predicted the Chinese to be less emotionally controlled than the Chinese reported themselves to be, which might have reflected the egocentric belief of German participants. On the other hand, they overestimated the Chinese tendency to maintain harmony in the out-group conflicts. This overestimation may result from the stereotype of the Chinese being collective-oriented.

Combining the above analysis of the German and Chinese self- and cross-cultural perceptions, several noteworthy findings emerge about inter-group perceptions: First, both groups agreed that Chinese communication style is indirect and implicit, whereas the German communication style is direct, task-oriented, and confrontational. Both groups

also made correct predictions concerning positive emotions, which might be due to the relatively overt expression of positive emotions in both cultures. Second, most of the misperceptions could be attributed to misjudgments based on the stereotypical image of Germans being individualists and the Chinese being collectivists (e.g. internal vs. situational attribution, self-enhancement vs. self-effacement). A few of the misperceptions resulted from egocentric beliefs of both groups; for example, the Chinese predicted that Germans would also make fewer attributions, and Germans considered the Chinese to be less emotionally controlled in conflicts with in-groups. Third, by looking at the complete data examining the divergence between self- and cross-cultural perceptions, it seems that German exchange students made more mistakes in predicting Chinese behavior. This result supported our hypothesis; that is, in many cases, misperceptions occurred because the German participants were not fully aware of the role of context in determining the behavior of their Chinese counterparts, and they underestimated the scope of behavioral change or adjustment on the part of the Chinese people.

Put together, we can see that the participants frequently based their predictions on stereotypes. Stereotypical views are usually exaggerated or over simplistic. However, it should be noted that stereotypes often do appear to reflect reality with some accuracy, with a “kernel of truth” (Allport, 1954). For example, Schroll-Machl (2003) asked several non-German groups (including Chinese, Japanese, Brazilians, Czechs, etc.) what they thought of Germans, and the answers were surprisingly similar: the Germans were viewed as direct, assertive, reliable, organized, etc. (see also German culture standards in section 1.1.2). Bond (1986) measured autostereotypes and heterostereotypes of American and Chinese exchange students and found that both groups saw the Chinese as more emotionally controlled, less open to others and less extroverted than the Americans. In the current study, the prevailing perceived communication styles among German and Chinese participants are consistent with previous empirical findings on Germany-China differences in communication. In addition, it should also be noted that stereotypes are not necessarily negative, and the interacting social groups could hold positive stereotypes of one another (e.g. Bond, 1986). In our study, the Chinese participants seemed to favor the directness and the honesty of Germans, and the German participants valued the Chinese concern for group coherence. It can thus be argued that as long as stereotypes are treated as a *provisional* basis for one’s interaction with others, they can assist intercultural effectiveness. Stereotypical characterizations can provide the basis on which both parties were able to negotiate how to

work effectively together, by accommodating important aspects of interpersonal style (Bond, 1986).

Finally, one may ask why the exchange students – especially the Germans – still had many misperceptions about their host nationals although they had direct experiences with the Chinese and thus learned firsthand about their hosts' culture. A number of explanations are possible, including the short period of sojourn, contacts at only the surface level, and the impact of the popular mass media which often reduces the complexity of the social reality. It should also be considered that culture standards consist of a *central norm* and a *realm of tolerance*. The norm provides the ideal, and deviations from the norm are accepted as long as they lie within the realm of tolerance (Thomas, 2003). Therefore, some degree of variation in social behavior can be observed. More importantly, culture is multi-faceted and nuanced. Especially Chinese society is undergoing rapid changes, and the behaviors of Chinese people are substantially affected by the situational contexts. To make accurate predictions, we therefore must understand the nature of culture and examine the factors which are guiding host nationals' behavior in particular situations. It is recommended that by analyzing individuals' behaviors in social situations (especially behaviors of Chinese people), all three factors – culture standards, individual personality, and situation – must be taken into account.

2.4.3 The Reported Culture and the Perceived Culture

The exchange students in this study were presented a list of statements concerning the cultural differences between Germany and China and were asked how they actually perceived their host culture. The statements were drawn from the literature and reflected the most commonly held beliefs about the cultural characteristics of Germany and China. The intriguing finding was that whereas most of the German cultural characteristics were confirmed by the Chinese exchange students in Germany, many of the statements concerning Chinese cultural characteristics were not supported by the German exchange students in China, which means that many often-cited Chinese cultural characteristics could not be definitively confirmed in this study. In addition, there was a large variance among the answers of the German respondents, probably reflecting widely varied personal experiences: Whereas some German exchange students perceived certain Chinese cultural characteristics exactly as they are described in the literature, others had fairly different

experiences. This finding raises a question: Why could most of German cultural characteristics as reported in the literature be confirmed by the Chinese exchange students, but only a few of the often-cited Chinese cultural characteristics were confirmed by the German exchange students? There are several potential explanations.

First of all, the present study may have only measured the special characteristics of an academic environment. The participants were young and well-educated university students, who may resemble each other across cultures. Moreover, the Chinese students probably are more individualistic than other groups of people in China. Therefore, they, for example, may make greater use of direct communication, or are more ready to voice their own opinions. As a result, German exchange students might not get the impression that “the Chinese avoid discussion”. It should also be taken into account that the German exchange students in China are treated more or less like guests. They are granted more freedom and are given more support at the university. Therefore, statements like “strict hierarchy in Chinese society” or “highly structured academic programs” have not been confirmed.

Second, the large social and ecological changes in China have led to changes in values and personality on the personal level (see section 1.2.3). For instance, the Chinese have become more individualistic and increasingly value individual performance and self-expression (Yang, 1988).

Third, in many cases, especially on values and on personality, intra-cultural variation is substantially greater than inter-cultural variation (Smith, Bond & Kagitcibaci, 2006). Indeed, when within-country comparisons are conducted, significant variation is found across social classes and geographic/urban-rural subgroups (Aycicegi & Harris, 2005; Marshall, 1997). Particularly the modern Chinese culture is not a unitary whole. Changes in Chinese society have created generational and sectoral differences in values and perspectives (Yang, 1988). As a result, German exchange students might have met very different personalities in China, and the experiences were therefore largely varied.

In addition, it must be distinguished between “ideal culture”, or “big traditions”, and the “real culture”, or “little traditions” (Johnson, Nathan & Rawski, 1985). In China, while the *Confucian big tradition* reflects the idealized, abstract thought of the upper classes (e.g. emphasis on virtues) (Lin, 1992), *little tradition* includes the customs, ideas, and values of ordinary Chinese people (e.g. performance, fortune). The uncritical application of

Confucian precepts to modern Chinese life may lead to an oversimplification of Chinese culture.

Finally, it is essential to be aware that many of the reported Chinese cultural characteristics are actually domain-specific or context-dependent. For example, the attributional style (internal/situational) and the self-enhancement tendency of Chinese people vary according to situations (see sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.4). In the current study, it was found that the importance of the situation substantially influences Chinese communication. Chinese social behavior, therefore, is in certain social contexts stereotypically “collectivist” (cooperative or harmonious), but in others exhibits an “individualist” (competitive, agonistic) style. Situational context influences behaviors of German people as well, but not as strongly as it does Chinese people.

2.4.4 Perceived Problems/Difficulties while Studying Abroad

The intriguing finding is that both German and Chinese exchange students reported facing very few or even no problems during their study abroad. German participants reported having only one serious problem, namely, they felt some uncertainty of whether the Chinese would actually keep their promises; Chinese participants even claimed they had no problem at all! Given the large cultural differences between Germany and China and the previous research indicating great adjustment difficulties for sojourners, it is rather surprising that participants in this study seemingly enjoy a totally smooth and successful cross-cultural transition. To account for this surprising finding, several potential explanations can be offered.

First, it is likely that university students of similar age and educational levels may get along easily with each other. It is also possible that the “university culture” was salient enough to override national cultural identities, enabling students to engage in successful interactions. Additionally, in the more temporary contact situation of the student exchange, both parties probably shared a “common culture” which derives from a mutual appreciation of cultural differences. Furthermore, it is in the interest of both groups to get to know the others’ traditions, lifestyle, and values, and this supports the willingness to overcome cultural barriers.

Second, the university environment is relatively well-structured and relaxed, and thus few severe conflicts may occur, especially between the exchange students and the local students. One German exchange student commented on the situation in an interview as follows:

At the university we are relatively removed from many uncomfortable situations which would emerge in the business world, for example. A friend of mine who is doing an internship in a German-Chinese joint venture has experienced far more problems with the Chinese.

There are also some favorable environmental factors which facilitate cross-cultural transitions. German exchange students are usually financially supported by the exchange programs, and they also enjoy more social support (e.g. tutors for foreign students) and more freedom (e.g. less hierarchy) at Chinese universities. Regarding Chinese exchange students in Germany, there is some evidence that sociocultural adaptation may be easier in more modern or developed countries, and people from a strictly hierarchical country to a less hierarchical country may experience fewer difficulties than the other way around (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

However, one may ask whether the Chinese respondents really encountered no problems in Germany, or whether they just wanted to be polite and avoided making negative comments on their host culture. It is likely that the Chinese participants tried to be polite by not criticizing their hosts so as to maintain social harmony. On the other hand, it is also possible that they indeed perceived few/no problems with Germans. For example, the direct German communication style is assumed to be a main potential source of cross-cultural tension, yet many Chinese exchange students have not experienced this to be the case, or they accepted or even favored this communication style.

Perhaps Germans are generally very direct, but German students with whom I'm often in contact are actually very polite and emotionally restrained.

My talks with German colleagues are usually about easy topics such as the weather, cooking or sport. I've not been in a conflict situation with them.

I prefer direct communication as well – it is easy, clear and honest. The Chinese way is often too complicated, even for me as a Chinese.

There is another noteworthy point which deserves consideration. The follow-up interviews with Chinese exchange students revealed that they do face some difficulties, especially difficulties in communicating with Germans. However, Chinese respondents did not view these difficulties as the result of cross-cultural communication problems, but

attributed them to their own inappropriate behaviors, for example, “I met some negative consequences because I didn’t express myself directly and clearly” or “I was misunderstood because I didn’t engage in the discussion”. This self-directed problem attribution seems to be related to the Chinese internal attribution of failures (section 1.2.1).

The most important reason why Chinese exchange students reported having no problems with German culture probably lies in their focus on other more demanding aspects of the cross-cultural transition rather than the communicative cultural differences. As reported in the past research, the essential concerns of Chinese international students are language problems, academic overload, identity problems, financial problems, and psychological problems (see section 3.1.1). The in-depth interviews with the Chinese exchange students in this study revealed the same problems. It is likely that compared with such fundamental difficulties, other “minor” cultural differences may appear unimportant to the Chinese exchange students.

Above we have discussed some potential reasons for the seeming absence of cross-cultural difficulties among German and Chinese participants. Let us now turn to the findings concerning the problems reported by the exchange students.

For the German exchange students the only problem which became statistically significant concerned Chinese promise-keeping. It seems that the Chinese often make promises arbitrarily and do not keep them later on. This behavior can be attributed to the different understanding of “lying” in the East and West (see also section 1.2.4), and to the different use of “yes” and “no”. In collectivist cultures, lying is acceptable behavior if it saves face or helps the in-group (e.g. Triandis & Al, 2001). Among East Asians, engaging in face-saving behavior is considered more important than honest and truthful communication (e.g. McLeod & Cament, 1987). For the Chinese, concern for face presents little freedom to say “no”, for example, to a request, and a “yes” does not necessary mean “I agree” or “I give you my word”. In many cases, a “yes” may convey multiple meanings such as “I’m listening” and “that’s possible” (e.g. Bond, 1996). By contrast, in German culture, lying is considered morally wrong. People who are not completely honest and straightforward will be handled cautiously or even mistrusted. To Germans, saying “no” is not considered impolite, but rather a statement that prevents misunderstandings, and the word “yes” suggests agreement and affirmation (e.g. Schroll-Machl, 2003). Trilling (1972) argues that when people have a strong sense that they themselves determine who they are, as is characteristic of individualists, they are more likely to seek sincerity and authenticity

than when they feel confined by traditions and obligations, as is more characteristic of collectivists.

It should be pointed out that there was a large variance in the answers of the German exchange students, which suggests that although problems with the Chinese culture hardly became significant on the aggregate level, experiences for every individual varied largely so that some of them did perceive considerable difficulties in China.

With regard to Chinese exchange students in Germany, although no problem with German culture was statistically significant, the comments in follow-up interviews actually revealed the difficulties they were facing. As stated above, major difficulties involved language problem, academic stress, identity problem, financial problem, and psychological problem (more details see section 3.1.1). There were also problems directly caused by Germany-China cultural differences. They mainly related to the direct and assertive communication style of German people. For example, misunderstandings emerged because Chinese students' allusions and hints were not understood by their German counterparts. Also, many Chinese participants found discussions with Germans to be quite aggressive. The matters at hand are fought out, each person taking his or her own position while the others defend their positions – which made the Chinese students feel rather awkward.

2.4.5 Conclusion

In light of the existing theory and empirical cross-cultural research, the present study examined cultural differences between Germany and China with a focus on cognition (attribution), emotion, and communication. It also compared the self-perception and cross-cultural perception of German and Chinese respondents, and assessed the difficulties facing the exchange students.

Results of the study suggest that many reports about cultural characteristics of Germany and China (especially those of Chinese culture) are stereotypical, inaccurate, or oversimplified. It is therefore essential to explore cross-cultural differences in a more culturally sensitive manner. Our results also indicate that research needs to take contextual factors into account when examining cross-cultural differences. Whether it is attribution, motivation, or communication, the present study clearly shows that situational factors exert powerful effects that can mediate or even change an individual's behavior. In addition, many reported cultural characteristics are actually domain-specific. Therefore, future

research needs to go beyond the focus on values and cultural main effects to examine culture from a multilevel perspective. For example, cross-cultural research needs to examine how cultural values at the national level interact with individual differences and situational contexts to predict attitudes and behaviors.

This study contributes to broaden the understanding of the nature of culture, provides important clues to factors which may influence German and Chinese behaviors, and offers real explanations for the intriguing group differences between German and Chinese students. Nonetheless, there are also limitations which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study. First, one study cannot conclusively rule out all alternative explanations, and interpretations of cross-cultural comparisons are particularly difficult. Second, retrospective self-reports of one's experiences may be affected by some cognitive biases such as overstatement in the processes of restoring or recalling the details of social interactions. Another common problem with cross-cultural work in general is that the items in the questionnaires and choices on the scales may have different meanings for participants from the two different cultures. In addition, the reliance of self-reports leaves open the possibility that the findings reflect divergent cultural beliefs about the inner Self rather than differences in culture norms.

One problem which warrants special attention concerns the answering tendency. A culture may differ in its response styles or self-presentational strategies, conceivably giving rise to the differences found in the study. Several response biases are possible. First, socially desirable responding (Paulhus, 1984) refers to the tendency of respondents to describe themselves as they would like to be seen. What is socially desirable differs between cultures. In Western cultures, self-actualization and individual achievement are more valued whereas cooperation and harmony are more valued in Asian cultures. Socially desirable responding includes two aspects. One is self-deceptive enhancement (seeing oneself in a positive light). Lalwani, Shavitt, and Johnson (2006) found that European and US students scored higher on self-deceptive enhancement than East Asian students. The other is impression management. It was found that discrepancy between public presentation and private belief is greater for Asian students than for students from more individualistic cultures (Leung & Bond, 1984). Second, there may be some special cultural response styles. For example, Chinese interaction style emphasizes social sensitivity (face, hierarchy) and politeness, which may lead to some answering bias. Finally, a reference-group effect may work (Heine, Lehman, Peng & Greenholtz, 2002). Reference-group effect refers to

people's tendency to compare themselves with others in their own culture instead of making responses about the Self. Different cultures have different norms for a particular dimension. For example, when comparing themselves with fellow Chinese, Chinese participants may not feel that they themselves are more collectivist than the others, whereas German participants, when comparing themselves with fellow Germans, may conclude that they themselves are not as individualistic as their fellow Germans. This would result in a "counterintuitive" finding, with Germans being more collectivist and the Chinese being more individualist.

In the preceding parts, the current empirical study was presented and the results were discussed. The following parts will turn to another focus of this thesis, namely cross-cultural adjustment of international students and intercultural training programs supporting the cross-cultural adjustment.

3 CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Cross-cultural living represents a life change accompanied by misunderstandings and uncertainty. It is typically experienced as quite stressful. International students are confronted with powerful adjustment stresses and challenges in adapting to new cultures and in managing personal and life tasks. It is clear that they need support to cope with adjustment difficulties.

One of the main aims of this study is to provide support for the cross-cultural adjustment of German and Chinese exchange students. Based on the theoretical concepts of cross-cultural adjustment and intercultural training (chapter 3) and the findings in the current study, this thesis offers a framework for a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students (chapter 4).

The present chapter begins by surveying the research literature on cross-cultural experiences in the context of international students, describing main concerns of study-abroad participants, and reporting on their psychological well-being (section 3.1). It then refers to approaches conceptualizing cross-cultural adjustment, and analyzes factors influencing adjustment (section 3.2). Section 3.3 goes on to outline the components of intercultural competence, and section 3.4 gives a brief description of the concept of intercultural training.

3.1 EXPERIENCES WHILE STUDYING ABROAD

3.1.1 Major Concerns of the International Students

A review of the literature indicates that international students face great challenges in the process of cross-cultural transitions. Quintrell and Westwood (1994) identified that the fear of failure, workload, desire for more interaction with local students, and financial matters as the highest level concerns of international students. With regard to Chinese international students, a number of studies have found that problems with host language proficiency appear to be their greatest difficulty (Chen, 1999; Graham, 1983; Kuo & Tsai,

1986; Guan, 2007; Xiao & Petraki, 2007). As language impacts the educational and sociocultural aspects of the student's life, a lack of proficiency in the host language may hinder students from effectively partaking in social interactions and successful academic performance. Another problem facing Chinese students relates to the academic distress. Since many Chinese students have excessive concerns and place extreme demands on themselves to attain academic goals, academic failure may lead to grief and shame, particularly because in the Chinese culture, face enhancement is integral to identity (Chen, 1999). Further serious problems Chinese international students encounter include homesickness and lack of contact with others (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Guan, 2007; Xiao & Petraki, 2007). It was found that only a small percentage of Chinese students are actively involved in interactions with local students. The majority are "inactive or incapable" of communication with the host nationals. Many Chinese students also suffer from financial problems. Because they must work a lot to finance their studies, it becomes difficult for them to find time to get into contact with local students or to concentrate on their studies (Guan, 2007; Xiao & Petraki, 2007). And finally, all these difficulties and stress may lead to psychological problems (e.g. Furnham, 2004; Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

One study which was carried out in a German university (Guan, 2007) reported the main adjustment problems for Chinese international students in Germany as follows: language problems (including academic problems), crisis of identification, financial problems, social isolations, and psychological problems.

3.1.2 Psychological well-being of the international students

As revealed above, international students are confronted with a number of stressors. The distress of cross-cultural transitions can manifest themselves in a variety of psychological, school-related, and social consequences.

A review of literature relating to the psychological problems of international students suggests a large variety of psychological difficulties ranging from simple loneliness, homesickness, and irritability to severe depression, confusion, and disorientation. Zwingman (1978), for example, reported about the "uprooting" disorder with symptoms like alienation, depression, nostalgia, and hopelessness among international students. Furnham (2004) found that compared to local students, international students have more

physical complaints and more somatic problems. They display a passive withdrawn interaction style and symptoms of depression, frustration, pessimism, and powerlessness. The emerging picture for Chinese student sojourners is troubling. Chinese international students are confronted with powerful adjustment challenges and stresses. Stressful life events and adjustment difficulties lead to, for example, increased depression among these students (e.g. Kuo & Tsai, 1986).

Sandhu (1994) states that the main causes of international students' problems include *intrapersonal factors* such as sense of loss, sense of inferiority, and sense of uncertainty (homesickness, perceived discrimination, threat to cultural identity), and *interpersonal factors* which relate to environments involving communication problems, culture shock, and loss of social systems. Both types interact and are generally intertwined. Many times, it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. Generally speaking, intrapersonal factors are largely responsible for most of the international students' problems.

3.2 CONCEPT OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Cross-cultural living is an experience full of challenges. In order to accomplish a successful cross-cultural transition, sojourners are required to adjust to the new environment and the new culture. Terms such as “adjustment”, “adaptation”, “acculturation” and “effectiveness” have often been used in the analysis of the outcomes of intercultural contact. There are overlaps and also some variation in the meanings of these terms which will not be discussed here. For this study, the term “adjustment” is applied.

3.2.1 Models of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Ward and her colleagues (e.g. Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993) differentiated between **psychological and sociocultural adjustment**. Psychological adjustment focuses on psychological well-being or satisfaction in new cultural environments, and sociocultural adjustment refers to the ability to fit in or effectively interact with members of host cultures (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). These two forms of adjustment are two independent dimensions: They exhibit different patterns over time and

are predicted by different variables. Psychological adjustment fluctuates over the sojourn and is predicted by variables such as social support, personality, and life changes. The indicator of psychological adjustment is the lack of mood disturbances. Sociocultural adjustment decreases with the length of the stay and is predicted by behavioral competence, culture learning, and quantity/quality of contact with host nationals. Sojourners' perceptions of their behavioral competence and acquisition of social skills have been used as indices of sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1996).

Berry (1997) refers to the stress due to experience of various adjustment stressors as "acculturative stress". Based on two issues – to which extent people wish to maintain their cultural identity, and to which extent people wish to interact with the host society – **four acculturation strategies** have been proposed: (a) marginalization (neither maintenance of one's own cultural identity nor interaction with host society), (b) separation (maintenance of cultural identity, but no interaction with host society), (c) assimilation (interaction with host society, but no maintenance of cultural identity), and (d) integration (maintenance of cultural identity and positive relation to host society). Assimilation and especially the integration strategy can facilitate acculturation (Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989).

Bennett (1993) identified **six stages of learning** to perceive and work with cultural differences. Moving from the ethnocentric to the ethnorelative, these phases are: (1) denial (isolation from others), (2) defense (cultural differences as a threat to one's own worldview), (3) minimization (superficial acknowledgment of cultural differences and the assumption "deep down all people are the same – just human."), (4) acceptance (recognition and acceptance of cultural differences), (4) adaptation (behavior modification to fit into the new culture), and (6) integration (reconciling cultural differences and forging a multicultural identity). The model suggests that intercultural effectiveness is more likely to be achieved by people in stages five and six, when they are capable of actively engaging with cultural differences.

3.2.2 Predictors of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Prior research has identified a range of factors which influence the process of cross-cultural adjustment. A review of the literature indicates that these factors can be categorized into individual and situational factors.

A) Individual factors

- Age, gender, socioeconomic status: Results are mixed to some degree. Nonetheless, generally speaking, younger sojourners, men, and people with higher socioeconomic status have fewer adjustment difficulties (e.g. Paige, 1993)
- Expectation: Negative expectations (for example, based on ethnocentrism, negative stereotypes, and prejudice) lead to uncertainty and anxiety about interacting with host nationals. Positive expectations (for example, based on positive stereotypes), in contrast, help to manage uncertainty and anxiety and enable the visitor to behave in a positive manner toward host nationals (e.g. Gudykunst, 2005a).
- Past intercultural experience: Positive experiences elicit satisfaction and facilitate adjustment (e.g. Rogers & Ward, 1993).
- Cultural knowledge: Inaccurate knowledge about the host culture has negative consequences for adjustment (e.g. Ward & Searle, 1991).
- Cultural identity: Strong cultural identity generally inhibits sociocultural adaptation (e.g. Ward & Kennedy, 1993).
- Motivation and goals: Differences in goals, e.g. goals to gain intercultural understanding, to achieve individual academic goals, or to broaden personal independence, may lead to different interaction behaviors. For example, international students who temporarily reside in a host country with a primary goal of achieving academic success are often less motivated to engage with the host society (e.g. Berry, 1997; Kim, 2005).
- Preparedness to adjust: Sojourners' readiness to learn and to adapt will enhance their adjustment (e.g. Kim, 2005).
- Host language proficiency: Sojourners' host language proficiency facilitates the social interaction with the host nationals and improves the cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Paige, 1993)
- Psychological constructs and processes, including:
 - Personality: e.g. flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, extraversion and openness, empathy (e.g. Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, Leong & Low, 2004).
 - Attributional style: Maladaptive attributional styles (ability for failure, and circumstances for success) may lead to higher depression and loneliness (Anderson, 1999).

- Locus of control: External control has a negative impact on psychological adjustment and health (e.g. Dyal, Rybensky & Somers, 1988; Seipel, 1988).
- Self-efficacy: It concerns a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task. People with high self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided. Self-efficacy sustains motivation, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression (Bandura, 1997). It was found that persons with high general self-efficacy expressed significantly greater degrees of cross-cultural adjustment than those with low self-efficacy (Harrison, Chadwick & Scales, 1996).
- Coping style: Positive coping style, such as low avoidance, humor and approach strategy (logical analysis, positive reappraisal, seeking support, and problem-solving), are positively related to low depression. Passive coping style, especially avoidance, is the most powerful predictor for poor psychological adjustment and distress among Asian international students (Ward & Kennedy, 2001; Khawaja & Bempsey, 2007).

B) Situational factors

- Cultural distance: Cultural similarity is associated with better sociocultural adjustment. For instance, it was found that Malaysian students in Singapore experienced less sociocultural adaptation problems than Malaysian students in New Zealand. Similarly, Chinese sojourners in Singapore adapted more readily than did Anglo-European residents (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).
- Length of stay in the host culture: Sociocultural adjustment improves with the increasing length of residence (Ward & Kennedy, 2001).
- Degree of ethnocentrism and host culture attitudes toward outsiders: Perceived discrimination and social isolation appear to be associated with the psychological distress. Studies show that discrimination has the potential to evoke a sense of low self-esteem and low self-confidence as the individual internalizes the negative evaluations (e.g. Berry, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).
- Interaction with host nationals: Increased contact and satisfaction with that contact are associated with fewer sociocultural difficulties (e.g. Ward & Kennedy, 1993).
- Social support: Empirical evidence has consistently shown that social support diminishes psychological distress. Yang and Clum (1994), for example, reported that

poor social support was associated with depressive symptoms and feelings of hopelessness in international students. Ward and Kennedy (2001) also found that a lack of support is likely to predict poor psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

Above is an overview of the general predictors for cross-cultural adjustment. A review of the literature which has specifically investigated Chinese sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment suggests that among the above mentioned predictors, there are several key factors which have particularly strong impact on the adjustment of Chinese international students and immigrants. With regard to the cross-cultural adjustment of German international students, very few studies exist. Therefore, in the following, I will focus on describing the prominent predictors for Chinese sojourner's cross-cultural adjustment.

Prominent predictors for Chinese sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment

Language proficiency. Problems with host language proficiency create the greatest perceived difficulty for Chinese sojourners (see also section 3.1.1). It was found that a central issue for the cultural adjustment of Chinese international students concerns the relation between self-confidence and proficiency in host language. Self-confidence in the host language was also associated with several indicators of psychosocial adjustment, such as high self-esteem, a greater sense of control over one's life, and greater satisfaction with life in general (Pak, Dion & Dion, 1985). Several studies point to the deleterious consequences of a lack of language proficiency to the psychological well-being of Asian sojourners (e.g. Cheung, 1989; Redmond & Bunyi, 1993).

Attributional style. Attributional style strongly mediates the relationship between stressors and the degree of depression (e.g. Anderson, 1999). As revealed in the literature, Chinese people tend to attribute success to circumstance and failure to one's own ability (e.g. Chiu, 1986; Crittenden, 1991). Anderson (1999) found the relatively maladaptive attributional styles of Chinese students accounted for much of their higher scores on depression and loneliness.

Locus of control. A number of studies have corroborated the association between an external control and psychological distress. Chan (1989), for example, found that Chinese students who were external had a higher level of adjustment problems as well as psychological problems. Kuo, Gray and Lin (1976) reported that an external locus of control was a more powerful predictor of psychiatric symptomatology in Chinese

immigrants to the US than demographic, socioeconomic, and life change variables. Links have also been established between an external orientation and depression, psychosomatic symptoms, and lower life satisfaction in Asian immigrants to the US (Dyal, Rybensky & Somers, 1988; Seipel, 1988).

Coping style. Differences in coping styles have been found between cultural groups. Leong and Lau (2001) maintained that Asian cultures have a tendency to use repression and avoidance. Similarly, Bjork, Cuthbertson, Thurman and Lee (2001) stated that passive coping strategies such as avoidance, withdrawal, resignation to and acceptance of fate are ubiquitous to the Asian coping style. Selmer (2002) also found that compared to Western sojourners, the Chinese used more symptom-focused and less problem-focused coping strategies. Past research on stress coping indicates that positive coping styles such as low avoidance, humor, and approach strategies (logical analysis, positive reappraisal, seeking support, and problem-solving) is positively related to low depression, whereas passive coping style, especially avoidance, is the most powerful predictor for poor psychological adjustment and distress among Asian international students (Ward & Kennedy, 2001; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2007).

3.3 COMPONENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Successful interaction across cultures requires intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is a complex phenomenon with multiple components which predict effective intercultural communication and adjustment.

A) Three dimensions

There is substantial agreement among researchers that cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions are the essential aspects of a sojourner's ability to adjust (e.g. Berry, 1997; Bennett, 2003; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Gersten, 1990; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

- Cognitive: understanding of the nature of culture and its influence on all human beings in various contexts; knowledge about other cultures and countries
- Affective: awareness of the influence of one's own culture on one's value, attitude and behavior; positive attitudes to other cultures

- Behavioral: ability to communicate with host nationals effectively and to establish relationships; ability to adjust one's behavior

B) Personality

While cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of host and home culture relations influence sojourners' adjustment, certain personality traits have also been found to be consistently influential in determining cross-cultural adjustment (Cui & van den Berg, 1991).

Frequently mentioned personality traits include empathy (e.g. Ruben, 1976; Hawes & Kealey, 1981), openness (e.g. Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971), flexibility (e.g. Hawes & Kealey, 1981; Ward, Leong & Low, 2004), and tolerance for ambiguity (e.g. Ruben, 1976). Cultural *empathy* refers to the ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of members of other cultural groups. *Openness* refers to an open and unprejudiced attitude towards out-group members and towards different cultural norms and values. *Flexibility* seems particularly important when the sojourners' expectations of the situation in the host country do not correspond with the actual situation. Elements of flexibility, such as the ability to learn from mistakes and the adjustment of one's behavior when required, are associated with the ability to learn from new experiences. *Tolerance for ambiguity* refers to the ability to react to ambiguous situations with little discomfort and to manage feelings of frustration.

Other personality traits believed to characterize intercultural competence include self-confidence (e.g. Ivancevich, 1969), patience and self-possession in the face of adversity and criticism (e.g. Harris, 1973), optimism (e.g. Hawes & Kealey, 1981), and independence (e.g. Ivancevich, 1969).

C) Foreign language ability

Given the research on the cross-cultural adjustment difficulties of international students, it is plausible to argue that foreign language ability is of critical importance to intercultural effectiveness (e.g. Kim, 2005). Especially for Chinese overseas students, host language ability is strongly associated with successful psychological and sociocultural adjustment (see section 3.2.2).

3.4 CONCEPT OF INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Intercultural training aims to improve intercultural competence and cross-cultural adjustment. It has been defined as an educational process focusing on promoting intercultural learning through the acquisition of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies required for effective interactions across cultures (Landis & Brislin, 1996; Morris & Robie, 2001).

Based on two central issues: culture general-cultural specific and didactic-experimental, Gudykunst, Guzley, and Hammer (1996) classified intercultural training into four categories: didactic culture-general, didactic culture-specific, experimental culture-general, and experimental culture-specific. *Culture-general training* aims to give participants a broad understanding of the meaning of the concept of culture. This should imply an increased self-awareness in which one's own behavior is influenced by culture. *Culture-specific training* aims at providing knowledge about one particular culture. *Didactic training* focuses on information-giving, which includes information about the target country (culture-specific) and the understanding of cultural influence on individuals (culture-general). Methods commonly used are lectures, videos, area studies, and cultural assimilator and cultural awareness information. *Experimental training* aims to reinforce behavior learning by experiencing the simulating critical incidents affectively. Methods like role play, simulation (cultural-general or cultural-specific), or bicultural communication workshops are usually applied.

Brislin and Yoshida (1994) recommend that intercultural training should cover four areas: (1) awareness of culture and cultural differences, (2) knowledge of a target culture, e.g. attribution training, (3) emotional challenges that trainees will encounter and how to cope with anxiety and stress, and (4) acquiring skills and adopting appropriate behaviors. Research on cross-cultural adjustment suggests that a multidimensional approach with cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements should be the goal of a training program (e.g. Bennett, 2003).

Some studies have reported some positive results of intercultural training, including improved intercultural skills, decreased stress, increased self-confidence, better interpersonal relationships, and better interaction with host nationals (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Black & Mendenhall, 1990). On the other hand, it is noted that intercultural training has a greater effect on cognitive dimensions, but less on affective dimensions (e.g. Kinast,

1998). Mendenhall et. al. (2003) reviewed the literature from 1988 to 2000, and found that intercultural training can effectively increase the trainee's knowledge (e.g. accurate attribution of different behavior), but does not always succeed in changing the trainee's behavior or attitudes. Moreover, long-term attitude change is more difficult to achieve (e.g. Gudykunst, 1979; Cargile & Giles, 1996).

4 FRAMEWORK FOR A TARGET GROUP-ORIENTED INTERCULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR GERMAN AND CHINESE EXCHANGE STUDENTS

As described in the preceding chapter, crossing cultures during a study-abroad experience is a significant transition event that brings with it a considerable amount of stress, involving both confrontation and adjustment to the new culture and to life challenges. To support sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment, intercultural training is considered an effective way.

In looking at intercultural training programs for German and Chinese international students, it is clear that they receive limited if any training to promote their intercultural competence. To the best of my knowledge, preparation programs for Chinese students who intend to study in Germany are rare. Often there are merely some informal talks between German language teachers and their Chinese students about German culture. This certainly cannot meet the urgent demands of the situation – as demonstrated in many studies, Chinese exchange students face a great number of difficulties associated with personal, academic, and life stress (see section 3.1). In Germany, many universities' preparation programs for German students who intend to go to China only provide students with the basic knowledge of the Chinese culture, different rules of behavior, and sometimes cognitive skills that allow them to understand the different culture. Moreover, a considerable percentage of the knowledge conveyed about Chinese culture is either outdated or inaccurate due to incomplete or stereotypical information, or due to oversimplification of Chinese social practices. In addition, among those existing training programs, it is common that they merely borrow concepts from programs for business sojourners. Although some issues facing business sojourners parallel those faced by the international students, there are also many additional, distinctive challenges in the academic context. The current study, for example, has demonstrated that both perceived cultural differences and adjustment difficulties for the exchange students differ to some extent from those that have been studied by business managers. Therefore, training for students should pay more attention to elements influencing adjustment in the academic

environment. In short, many existing intercultural training programs may have conceptual and operational limitations due to the lack of a theoretical and integrative framework.

In response to the limited research in this field, my focus here is to explore the concept of cross-cultural adjustment along with its implications for German and Chinese exchange students, so as to develop a framework for a target group-oriented training program. This should be achieved on the basis of the general review of literature and empirical findings from the current study. In section 4.1, implications are drawn from findings of the current study, and attempts are made to develop a theoretical rationale for the conceptual training framework. The framework will then be presented in section 4.2.

4.1 THEORETICAL RATIONALE FOR THE DESIGN OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

In the following, a theoretical rationale for the design of the training program is provided. It is based on the analysis of problems and needs of German and Chinese exchange students (section 4.1.1) and the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these two groups of students (section 4.1.2).

4.1.1 Problem Analysis and Need Analysis

Both German and Chinese exchange students in this study reported very few problems during their study abroad. The apparent absence of adjustment difficulties may result from a constellation of various factors (see section 2.4.4). Although only few problems were identified by the questionnaire directly, the follow-up interviews with some of the participants proved to be very fruitful, and have provided a great amount of additional information about cross-cultural experiences of the exchange students.

The German exchange students in China generally got along well with the Chinese local students, although they sometimes did feel insecure because of Chinese' indirect communication (for example, uncertainty regarding Chinese promise-keeping; see section 2.4.4). Most conflicts they recalled concerned conflicts with the Chinese "outside" the campus – for example, arguments on the street. They also reported discomfort, frustration or even anger in trying to adapt to Chinese social norms – for example, proper behavior according to one's role and status. The German students wished to learn more about

China, to understand why Chinese behaviors are sometimes “mystifying”, and to get support in establishing more close friendships with local Chinese students.

With regard to Chinese exchange students in Germany, the follow-up interviews generally supported the findings of previous research (section 3.1.1). The greatest problem facing Chinese exchange students was the host language ability. The (perceived) lack of German language proficiency was closely associated with the lack of social interactions with German local students and academic stress. Difficulty in communication practice with the host nationals was another barrier. It was primarily ascribed to the language problem, but also to cultural differences in conversational norms or speakers’ interest in certain topics. Financial problem was also a major source of stress for Chinese exchange students which sometimes prevents them from fully enjoying cross-cultural living. Many students – especially females – also made mention of psychological distress such as depression, fear, or psychosomatic symptoms such as sleep disturbance. The Chinese students wished to have more contacts with German local students, to achieve good academic performance, and to be able to cope well with life’s challenges. In Table 12, the results of the problems and needs assessments are summarized.

German Exchange Students in China	Chinese Exchange Students in Germany
Main problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chinese indirect communication, such as “unkept” promises ▪ Discomfort or frustration with Chinese social norms, e.g. Chinese emphasis on role and status ▪ Difficulties becoming in-group members of Chinese society 	Main problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language ability ▪ Academic problems ▪ Lack of social contact with Germans ▪ Financial difficulties ▪ Psychological problems
Needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More in-depth knowledge about China ▪ Understanding inconsistency in Chinese behavior ▪ Deeper relationships with the Chinese 	Needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More social interaction with Germans ▪ Coping with academic and life stress

Table 12. Summary of problems and needs of German and Chinese exchange students

4.1.2 Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses of Target Groups

For a sound framework it is essential to identify the existing strengths and weaknesses of the target groups, so that the specific qualities of the participants can be mapped onto the training program.

4.1.2.1 German exchange students in China

Weaknesses

- Insufficient or inaccurate cultural knowledge

As revealed in the current study, many German exchange students have insufficient or inaccurate knowledge about Chinese culture. The understanding of Chinese behavior often applies at the surface level, which cannot capture the complexity of Chinese culture and social practices.

- Large cultural distance

Cultural distance has an impact on many aspects of cross-cultural living. In the current study, some German exchange students perceived strong conflict between their own cultural beliefs and the social reality in China, e.g. in China not everyone is treated equally, and individuals are expected to behave according to one's role and status.

- Confrontational communication style

Germans' communication style appears at times to be too direct for the Chinese audience, especially the unrestrained expression of criticism without concern for others' face.

- Inflexibility

Germans are often viewed by the Chinese as inflexible or even arrogant due to their strict orientation to rules and principles, and due to their perfectionism.

- Unwillingness to adjust oneself, to accept new roles and to fit into Chinese society

German culture emphasizes unity, integrity, and internal consistency of the Self. Germans usually attempt to change the situation and are less ready to make behavior adjustments.

Strengths

- Enhanced motivation to explore the new culture and to interact with host nationals

When asked what motivated them to study in China, all the German participants in the current study had the same spontaneous answer: “I wanted to get to know the country and people better” or “I want to broaden my horizons”. The German exchange students were interested in learning more about Chinese culture. Their intrinsic motivation was that of exploration and seeking out new experiences.

- Openness and sociability

German exchange students are usually open to new experience in a foreign country, and behave in a more extroverted way. They are ready to take the initiative to make contact with host nationals, and engage in social interactions.

4.1.2.2 Chinese exchange students

Weaknesses

- Lack of motivation to interact with host nationals

To the question “What is your goal for studying in Germany?”, all the Chinese participants in this study answered, “My goal is to complete my studies successfully and then to find a good job”. Other goals, like cultural learning or contact with host nationals, were hardly present or were subordinated to the first goal.

The lack of interest in cultural learning among the Chinese students is mainly due to the Chinese emphasis on academic performance and the pragmatic goal of their study abroad (to get a good job). To some extent it also results from the demanding situational conditions (academic overload, excessive working hours in order to finance one’s studies). Besides this, perhaps the most essential reason that the Chinese lack in social interactions with Germans is the perceived stress during communication. Because of the language deficiency and face concern, they feel a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety when communicating with German local students. Therefore, they only attempt to make the necessary adjustment to fit into the academic environment, but often choose a separation strategy during their stay in Germany.

- Indirect communication style

The indirect communication style of Chinese students often leads to misunderstandings in interactions with Germans; for example, they hesitate to state their wishes and opinions clearly. Moreover, their concern for face and fear of failure hinder them in actively participating in the classroom or in social life with host nationals.

- Shyness

Prior studies generally reveal a weaker tendency for the Chinese to be sociable and extroverted and a stronger tendency to be self-contained and introverted. They are often shy, and feel discomfort in social interactions with out-groups members (Bond, 1996).

- Psychological constructs (see section 3.2.2)
 - External locus of control and lack of self-efficacy
 - Maladaptive attribution style (failure to ability, success to circumstances)
 - Passive coping style

Strengths

- Readiness to learn and adjust

Chinese people usually have a malleable Self and are willing to adjust their behaviors. They are also willing to perform self-monitoring (self-observation and self-control guided by situational cues of social appropriateness) (Snyder, 1974).

- Flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity

The Chinese are usually flexible, and feel less tension in the face of ambiguity.

- Respect for German modernity and highly developed technology

The respect for German modernity and highly developed technology leads to a respect for German culture. Although the Chinese usually have a strong cultural identity, they show no out-group dispositionalism to Germans.

In the following, Table 13 summarizes the results of the target group analysis.

German Exchange Students in China	Chinese Exchange Students in Germany
Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient or inaccurate cultural knowledge about China ▪ Large cultural distance ▪ Confrontational communication ▪ Inflexibility ▪ Lack of readiness to adjust, to accept the new role and to fit in 	Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of motivation to interact with the host nationals ▪ Indirect communication, face concern ▪ Shyness ▪ Psychological constructs, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - external of control and lack of self- efficacy - maladaptive attributional style - passive coping style
Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhanced motivation to explore the new culture and to interact with the host nationals ▪ Openness and sociability 	Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Readiness to learn and to adjust ▪ Flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity ▪ Respect for German culture

Table 13. Summary of weaknesses and strengths of German and Chinese exchange students

4.2 FRAMEWORK FOR A TARGET GROUP-ORIENTED TRAINING PROGRAM

Based on a general review of the literature, empirical findings of the current study, and theoretical considerations discussed above, a framework for intercultural training for German and Chinese exchange students is suggested. This framework views the results of cross-cultural adjustment as determined by culture, the individual, and situational contexts. It consists of three components: three-dimension culture learning (cognitive, affective, behavioral), self-management training, and self-confidence in host language ability.

A) Three-dimension culture learning

In accordance with the already presented formulation of intercultural competence, this study suggests that intercultural training can potentially support the cross-cultural adjustment of the participants on three dimensions:

(1) The cognitive dimension

The cognitive training aims to improve the participants' understanding of the nature of culture and how it influences all human beings in various contexts (culturally general

knowledge), to convey knowledge about another culture (culturally specific knowledge), and to discourage stereotypes and oversimplification.

As revealed in the current study, especially the German exchange students have insufficient knowledge about China. It is partly due to outdated or inaccurate knowledge which prevails in common thought, but is also due to the great complexity of Chinese culture and rapid changes in Chinese society. Therefore, cognitive training needs to highlight two central issues – the comprehensive understanding of the culture and meta-cognition.

Comprehensive understanding of culture. Much of the literature implies that people will be effective in cross-cultural interaction if they learn about values, norms, and the cultural practices of the new country. However, this strategy risks overemphasizing superficial knowledge and stereotypical thinking, for it is built on a deterministic (and simplistic) view of the impact of cultural values on behavior. As argued earlier, human beings' behavior needs to be understood in terms of dynamic relations among cultural values, personality, and situation as well as their connection with historical and ecologic basis. Learning about cultural practices and values is helpful as the first orientation in a foreign culture, but is not sufficient. Cognitive training should use a multi-leveled model to represent the complexity of culture, including ecological-historical influences and the adaptive individual-level process. For example, the changes in Chinese values and personality (e.g. they are becoming less socially oriented and more individually oriented, see section 1.3) can be better understood as a result of societal modernization. Altogether, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of culture, it is necessary to acquire broad knowledge about topics such as economic systems, political institutions, social relationships, and so forth in order to map various patterns into a coherent picture and to gain insights into individuals' behavior within the culture.

Although comprehensive cultural learning is desirable, it is very difficult to fulfill this demand because the training duration is usually very short (two or three days), and in so little time the description of a culture must be brief and simplified. In order to overcome this limitation, meta-cognitive ability is essential.

Meta-cognition. Meta-cognition is defined as thinking about thinking, including how to deal with knowledge gained under a variety of circumstances and how to incorporate relevant experiences as a general guide for future interaction (Early & Peterson, 2004). It is

argued that meta-cognition is a critical aspect of cross-cultural competence because purely informational briefings are not sufficient to increase sojourners' interpersonal and professional effectiveness. Moreover, training cannot prepare participants for every situation which they may encounter overseas. Therefore, much of what is required in a new culture is putting together patterns into a coherent picture, and intercultural training needs to support the sojourners in learning how to learn (Bennett, 1986; Brislin & Bhawuk, 1999; Early & Peterson, 2004).

Given the great complexity of Chinese society, meta-cognitive ability appears even more important for German exchange students in China. As revealed in the current study, German exchange students experience many situations in which they expect the Chinese to engage in a certain form of behavior and then observe an entirely different form of the behavior from their host nationals. Thus, training should aim to enable the participants to contemplate why the host nationals do not behave in a certain manner, and develop the ability to learn from experience so that they can handle refuted expectations.

(2) The affective dimension

Affective training primarily aims to make participants' attitudes toward people from other cultures more positive. To achieve this goal, besides learning about the other culture, it is essential to improve participants' self-awareness – that is, to reflect first on the impact of one's own cultural understanding on one's attitude and behavior.

As can be seen from the current study, especially the German exchange students displayed some difficulties in accepting certain Chinese norms and social practices. Therefore, within the frame of self-awareness development, affective training needs to increase participants' intercultural tolerance to cultural diversity, and to develop the ability and flexibility to reorganize one's self-concept.

(3) The behavioral dimension:

Behavioral training aims to improve participants' ability to communicate with host nationals effectively and to achieve positive relations to host nationals. Successful interactions with host nationals require openness to new experiences, tolerance of ambiguity, and behavioral adequateness and effectiveness. Openness to new experience involves careful observation and listening, experimentation and risk taking. During this process, tolerance of ambiguity is important. Sojourners need to suspend judgment, experience doubt, and accept a degree of uncertainty until a new understanding is achieved.

Successful cross-cultural interaction requires sojourners to behave adequately and effectively. Sojourners need to enhance their context-sensitivity – that is, to adjust to new situations and generate effective strategies for each situation. They need to be aware of more than one behavior repertoire so as to handle the complexity and dynamics of culture, and to provide the best action strategy in response to the unique circumstance of each intercultural interaction.

To train German and Chinese exchange students, different focus may be laid. For German participants, tolerance of ambiguity, context-sensitivity, and behavioral adequateness may be more important. For Chinese participants, openness to new experience and effective communication with host nationals will be more beneficial.

B) Self-management training

Self-management training draws on the concept of psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; see section 3.2.1). Ward and Kennedy (1996) noted that both macro and micro influences operated during cross-cultural transition, although empirical research has largely emphasized individual level factors such as personality, self-perceptions, and social support.

As indicated in the literature and in the current study, the main difficulties facing Chinese international students are language problems, academic stress, social interaction with host nationals, financial problems, and psychological problems. All these life and academic factors require coping. Thus, self-management training is of particular importance for Chinese international students to improve their ability to cope with stress. In the following, some suggestions regarding procedures of self-management are made:

- Increasing the motivation of exchange students to interact with host nationals

First of all, training needs to encourage students to pursue not only their academic goal, but rather multiple goals for their study abroad. As mentioned earlier, most Chinese students focus chiefly on their academic goal. Only after this goal is fulfilled are they ready to seek deeper relationships with host nationals. Therefore, students need to realize that cross-cultural interactions are valuable learning opportunities to broaden one's horizons, to develop oneself, and to equip oneself for the future.

Training should also enhance participants' curiosity about the other culture. Curiosity is a motivational prerequisite for exploratory behavior. International students need to become

interested in gaining new experiences and discovering other perspectives and ways of thinking.

Empirical findings and informal observations reveal that Chinese international students mostly do have a willingness to communicate with host nationals. However, they are seldom actively engaged in cross-cultural interactions. There may be several explanations for this, including a lack of opportunity or time, and language problem, etc. Yet the most crucial reason may be anxiety about interacting with host nationals. Due to language problems and cultural distance, Chinese international students feel it is very difficult to express themselves clearly. They also worry about making mistake or being rejected. As a consequence, they choose to avoid such situations. Intercultural training should therefore establish in Chinese participants the confidence to take risks, and improve their ability to manage anxiety. In other words, the enjoyment in interaction with host national needs to be increased. This can be done, for example, through reattribution of stress experiences (see below).

- Reattribution and reinterpretation of stress experiences

Lazarus (1993) points out that events may be appraised by an individual as either harmful, threatening, or challenging. Psychological distress in Chinese students in cross-cultural interactions may indicate that they perceive cultural misunderstandings as harmful or threatening. The cross-cultural difficulties are seen as threats not only to goal achievement, but also to their sense of self-respect, competence, and identities. To the extent that cross-cultural difficulties are defined as problems to be avoided, the chance to learn is also avoided. Therefore, students need to normalize the stress experience, and reframe cross-cultural interactions as learning opportunities. As Ting-Toomey (1999) argues, although cross-cultural adjustment difficulties are inevitably stressful and disorienting, they can have positive results if managed effectively, including a sense of well-being, heightened self-esteem, cognitive openness and flexibility, increased tolerance for ambiguity, enhanced confidence in the Self and others, and competence in social interactions.

- Developing the ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships (social support)

Social support (from both host nationals and co-nationals) has demonstrated a robust effect on cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Intercultural training

should therefore help participants to develop the ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships (especially with host nationals). This ability involves general social competence, and also refers to the above-mentioned motivation to interact with host nationals and the ability to interpret cross-cultural difficulties.

- Improving openness, flexibility, and tolerance of frustration (see section 3.3)
- Enhancing coping resources of international students (see section 3.2.2), including:
 - internal locus of control and self-efficacy
 - active coping style
 - adaptive attribution style, e.g., to attribute success to one's ability, and failure to circumstance

C) Self-confidence in host language ability

A substantial number of studies have reported that the greatest problem perceived by Chinese international students is poor host language ability. At first glance, intercultural training is not the proper method to resolve this problem – language courses are actually the better solution. However, if we take a closer look at this issue, it becomes apparent that the perceived insufficiency in host language ability is associated with several indicators of psychosocial adaptation, such as low self-esteem, a reduced sense of control over one's life, and reduced satisfaction with life in the host country (Pak, Dion & Dion, 1985). Thus, intercultural training needs to prepare Chinese students to deal with the stressful consequences of gaps in language ability.

Moreover, informal observation and interviews with exchange students have hinted that in many cases Chinese students tend to falsely attribute their cross-cultural difficulties to language deficiency and overlook other potential reasons. It seems that language problems are merely a cause at the surface. Informal observations have shown that although German exchange students in China mostly speak very little Chinese, they are still interested and active in interacting with Chinese host nationals, whereas many Chinese exchange students with relatively good German language abilities still feel uncomfortable communicating with Germans. Thus the fundamental cause of the language problem of Chinese international students is not language proficiency itself but rather psychological factors such as lack of motivation to interact, maladaptive interpretation of communication difficulties, and most of all, the Chinese face-concern (e.g. oversensitivity towards mistakes and criticism). Intercultural training therefore needs to make this point salient to Chinese participants and

decrease their self-perceived problem with the host language through self-management training.

Above we have discussed the three components for the design of international training for German and Chinese exchange students. Table 14 below provides an overview of these components. Given the varied problems and needs of these two groups, it is clear that training needs to have varied focus. For example, German exchange students may profit more from cognitive training, and Chinese students more from self-management training. The different aspects in affective and behavioral training programs should be matched to the special needs of these two cultural groups as well.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Three-dimension culture learning</u></p> <p>1) Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive understanding of culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - current and accurate knowledge about the target culture (culturally specific) - understanding of nature and complexity of culture, including ecological-historical influences - understanding of behavior as determined by cultural value, the individual, and situational context ▪ Meta-cognition: thinking about thinking; learning how to learn (e.g. learning from experience, putting various pattern into a coherent picture) <p>2) Affective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-awareness: reflection on one's own culture ▪ Positive attitude towards host nationals ▪ Sensibility to cultural diversity tolerance ▪ Flexibility of self-concept <p>3) Behavioral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective communication with host nationals ▪ Positive relationship with host nationals ▪ Openness to new experience (observation, experimentation, risk taking) ▪ Tolerance of ambiguity (suspending judgment, adequateness and effectiveness of behavior) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Self-management training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing motivation to interact with host nationals (multiple goals, curiosity, enjoyment in interaction) ▪ Reattribution and reinterpretation of stress experiences ▪ Ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships (social support) ▪ Openness, flexibility, and tolerance of frustration ▪ Coping skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - internal locus of control and self-efficacy - active coping style - adaptive attribution style <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Self-confidence in host language ability</u></p> <p>Intergrated into the self-management training</p>
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Table 14. Three components of the intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students

Besides the components described above, some additional issues regarding the design of the training program need to be noted.

First, we must be aware that a relatively short-term training course may have limited impact on some of the factors influencing adjustment – for example, individual factors such as personality traits or cultural identity. Moreover, most of the situational factors such

as cultural distance, attitudes of the host nationals towards out-groups, or financial difficulties are fixed factors, and can hardly be influenced by the training course. However, we can incorporate elements into the training program which inform the participants about these factors and their possible influence on cross-cultural adjustment, get them prepared for the upcoming challenges, and above all provide strategies to minimize possible negative effects of such factors.

Second, the current training practice is usually geared towards arrival and orientation and neglects the follow-up mechanisms. Since the students experience a continuous process of adjustment, it is important for training and counseling services for international students to be offered on a continuous basis (before they arrive, during their stay, and after their return home). One possibility for an ongoing support is to add computer-based learning in addition to the classical face-to-face training. A net-based system for cooperative cultural learning can provide flexible and continuous support which will help to achieve a long-term effect.

In addition, some adjustment difficulties need to be encountered with institutional support. The university can offer counseling services, and establish programs which help international students to develop social networks. For example, a peer pairing program in which newly arrived graduate students are paired with host national students who have received training in intercultural communication can facilitate international students' adjustment to the new culture and lead to better academic performance (Westwood & Barker, 1990).

Finally, due to the difficulty of adapting from well-established practices and beliefs to new forms of living and thinking, it is important to address the issue of implementing change and allow the students time to make the transition. For example, that Chinese students usually use memorization rather than participation learning methods is a cultural difference. They are, however, able to adopt an active learning method if they obtain sufficient guidance.

In the following, Figure 8 presents the complete framework for the design of a target group-oriented intercultural training for German and Chinese exchange students.

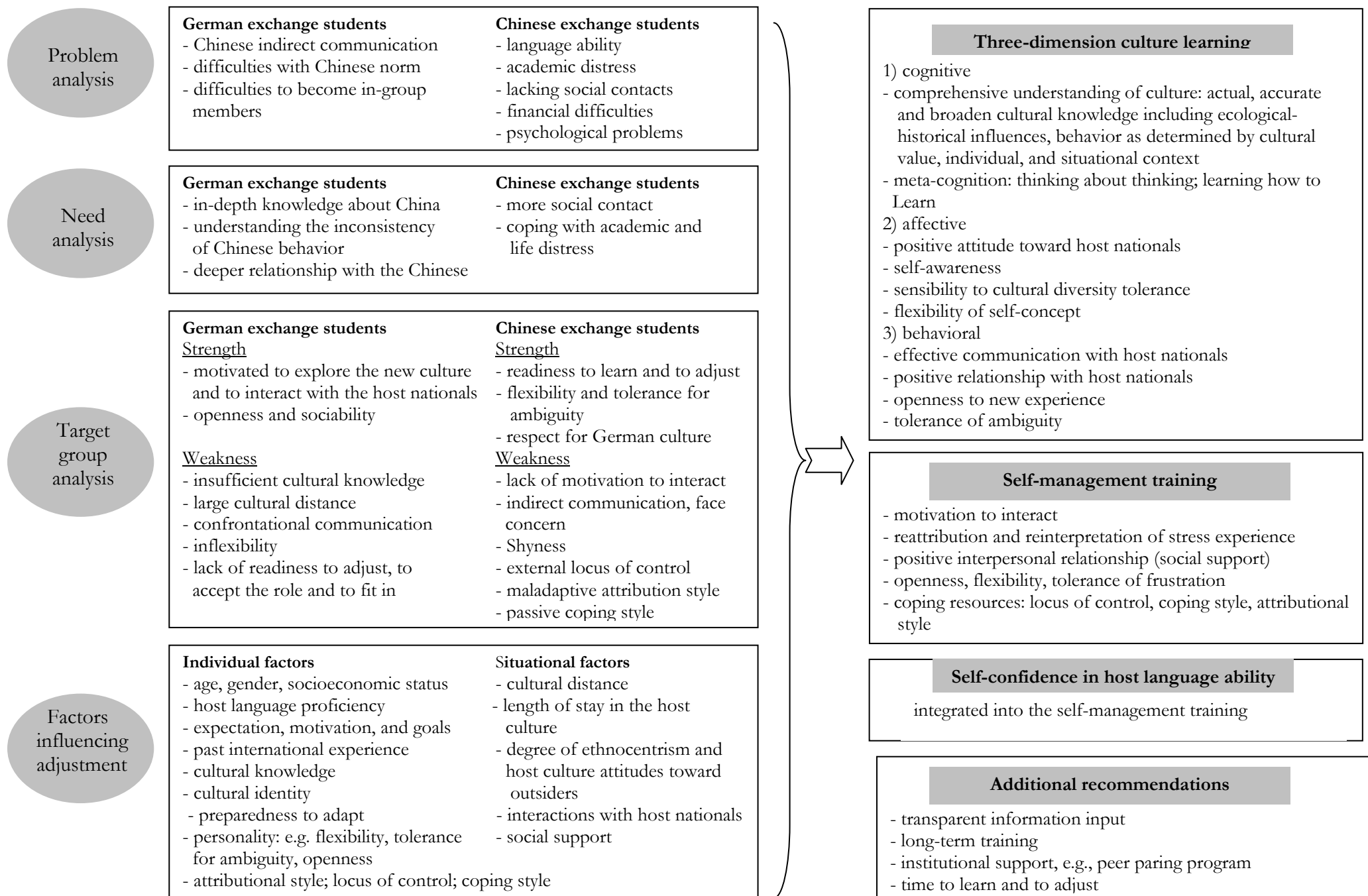


Figure 8. Framework for a target group-oriented intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students

4.3 CONCLUSION

Studying abroad is a life experience full of challenges. Although a large number of studies have found that international students encounter many adjustment difficulties that can affect their psychological and socio-cultural adjustments, very few studies have specifically examined the cross-cultural living of German exchange students in China and Chinese exchange students in Germany. Moreover, no study has offered a research-based and target group-oriented concept of intercultural training for these two groups of students. To address these research limitations in the face of new global challenges, I introduce and discuss a conceptual framework for an intercultural training program for German and Chinese exchange students. This framework is based on a literature review of cultural differences between Germany and China, my own research on the cross-cultural experience of German and Chinese exchanges students, and a theoretical conceptualization of intercultural adjustment and competence. It provides a significant improvement on existing approaches because it derives from a detailed analysis of problems and needs of the exchange students, and is uniquely tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of the participants. It is built upon a psychological model of cross-cultural adjustment, and provides an integrated approach to training dealing with knowledge and learning, motivation, and behavioral features. In sum, this thesis contributes to existing research on intercultural training by offering an understanding of adjustment processes of German and Chinese exchange students and providing a theoretical and integrative framework in conceptualizing a target group-oriented training program for them.

Future studies are encouraged to examine closely the everyday cross-cultural interactions in German and Chinese societies to develop a more complete understanding of the impact of cultural environment, situational contexts, and individual behaviors on the process of cross-cultural communication and adjustment. Future studies also need to specify and test the interrelationship among factors influencing cross-cultural adjustment, and provide more complete insights into intercultural effectiveness.

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APPENDICES

The questionnaire was originally prepared in German and Chinese. If you prefer, you can download the complete questionnaire from the web site <http://www.psychologie.uni-freiburg.de/Members/song>.

Enclosed below is the English translation of the questionnaires for German exchange students in China and for the German local students.

Appendix A: Questionnaire for German exchange students

Appendix B: Questionnaire for German local students

Part One

This part of the questionnaire contains statements regarding some cultural differences between Germany and China which have been often reported in the literature. Please make judgments about whether these cultural differences are true and accurate according to your personal experience, and to comment on whether these differences have led to difficulties in your cross-cultural living in China.

It is reported that there is a higher and stricter hierarchy in China and in Chinese universities than in Germany. Chinese university lecturers tend to use more control and instruction.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that the course of study in Chinese universities is more structured and more clearly regulated than in Germany.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that Chinese communication is indirect and implicit, leaving „room for interpretation“, whereas German communication is direct, explicit, and unambiguous.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that the way Chinese and Germans present their opinions or intentions is different: Chinese people tend to pay much attention to the reaction of the listeners or refer firstly to others' views before presenting their own opinions or intentions.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that the way Chinese and Germans express refusals is different: Chinese people usually express their refusals in an indirect way, for example, they avoid saying “no” directly.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you’ve chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that the way Chinese and Germans deal with conflict is different: Chinese people tend to avoid direct confrontation or criticism to others as much as possible.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you’ve chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported the way Chinese and Germans make promises is different: Chinese people – for the concern of social harmony and the face – often make promises but do not keep them later on.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you’ve chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that the way Chinese and Germans deal with criticism is different: Chinese strong concern for face leads to a compliant style of speaking. Chinese people avoid arguing or overtly disagreeing with others. If they are criticized by others, they often feel embarrassed or offended.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you’ve chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that the way Chinese and Germans present information is different: Chinese people tend to state extensive background information before coming to the main topics.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you’ve chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that compared with Germany, social network play a more important role in Chinese society. Interpersonal connections can be a great help to achieve one's goals.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that compared with German students, Chinese students are usually quiet in the class and seldom discuss and question.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

During your stay in China, have you experienced situations in which the direct presentation of your own view and the discussion with others led to disadvantages for you?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that compared with Germans, the Chinese usually avoid show strong emotions, especially the negative ones such as anger in public.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

During your stay in China, have you experienced situations in which your open expression of emotions led to disadvantages for you?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that on the contrary to Germans' rule orientation and exact time planning, the Chinese behave in a more pragmatic way and are less rule-oriented.
Moreover, they make less use of exact time planning, but prefer more flexibility.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

It is reported that compared to German students, Chinese students tend to choose those fields of studies which may ensure a prospect of a well-paid carrier. Factors such as personal interest, self-development or personal identification with the course of the studies are of secondary importance.

Have you experienced this cultural difference?

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ very much

If yes (this means, if you've chosen one of the latter three options), did this cultural difference lead to a problem or difficulty for you?

Not problematic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very problematic

Additional remarks / an example of your experience:

Have you met any other situations in which cultural differences between Germany and China have led to difficulties for you?

Part Two

This part of the questionnaire consists of a series of scenarios. Please rate on a 6-point scale about how the Chinese students would probably behave in the given situations.

You and a Chinese student are visiting an art exhibition. The Chinese student dislikes the painting, which is, however, your favorite.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

a) Express his/her opinion directly

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) Express his/her opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases like “perhaps”, “it could be”...

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) Make no comments on your position

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) Suggest asking the art expert/professor for his or her opinion

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

You and a Chinese student are asked by your professor to complete an assignment. Your performance will be graded. The Chinese student completely disagrees with your solution; he/she has a totally different idea.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

a) Express his/her opinion directly

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) Express his/her opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases like “perhaps”, “it could be”...

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) Make no comments on your position

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) Suggest asking the art expert/professor for his or her opinion

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

You and a Chinese student completed a seminar paper together. This seminar paper was given a top grade by your professor.

How do you think to what the Chinese student would attribute this success?

a) to him-/herself, e.g. his/her own ability

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) to the other student (in this case you), e.g. the ability of the others

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) to the group performance

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) to the situation, e.g. an easy task, a nice professor

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

How do you think the Chinese student would feel?

a) happiness not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) relief not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) pride in oneself not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) pride in the group not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

e) gratitude to the other one not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

f) gratitude to the professor not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

other feelings: _____

You and a Chinese student completed a seminar paper together. This seminar paper was graded as “unacceptable” by your professor.

How do you think to what the Chinese students would attribute this failure?

a) to him-/herself, e.g. his/her own incompetence

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) to the other student (in this case you), e.g. the incompetence of the others

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) to the poor group performance

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) to the situation, e.g. a difficult task, a demanding professor

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

How do you think the Chinese student would feel?

a) disappointment not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) anger with oneself not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) anger with others not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) anger with professor not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

e) shame not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

other feelings: _____

A Chinese student is praised by his/her professor for his/her excellent seminar paper.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

▪ Express his/her gratitude and also express his/her regret that his/her work still needs improvement

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

A Chinese student is applying for an attractive assistant job which has drawn many applicants.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

- Act highly self-confidently and point out his/her excellent qualification.

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

Assuming a friend of a Chinese student carelessly drives the bike into him/her.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

- a) remain calm, consider the situation objectively, and don't get angry

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- b) express anger openly and dispute with the friend

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- c) suppress the anger and avoid disputes

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

Assuming one student whom the Chinese student doesn't know carelessly drives the bike into him/her.

How do you think the Chinese student would behave?

- a) remain calm, consider the situation objectively, and don't get angry

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- b) express anger openly and dispute with the unknown student

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- c) suppress the anger and avoid disputes

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

Appendix B: Questionnaire for German local students

- Gender: male ☐ female ☐ Age: _____
- Your course of study: _____ In which semester? ()

This questionnaire consists of a series of scenarios. Please rate on a 6-point scale about how you would behave in the given situations.

You and another student are visiting an art exhibition. You dislike the painting, which is, however, the favorite of the other student.

How do you behave?

a) Express your opinion directly

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) Express your opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases like “perhaps”, “it could be”...

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) Make no comments on his/her position

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) Suggest asking the art expert/professor for his or her opinion

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

You and another student are asked by your professor to complete an assignment. Your performance will be graded. You completely disagree with the solution of the other student; you have a totally different idea.

How do you behave?

a) Express your opinion directly

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) Express your opinion indirectly by trying not to express any criticism, using phrases like “perhaps”, “it could be”...

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) Make no comments on your position

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) Suggest asking the art expert/professor for his or her opinion

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

You and another student completed a seminar paper together. This seminar paper was given a top grade by your professor.

To what do you attribute this success?

a) to yourself, e.g. you own ability

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) to the other student, e.g. his/her ability

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) to the group performance

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

e) to the situation, e.g. an easy task, a nice professor

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

What do you feel?

a) happiness not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) relief not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) pride in oneself not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) pride in the group not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

e) gratitude to the other one not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

f) gratitude to the professor not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

other feelings: _____

You and another student completed a seminar paper together. This seminar paper was graded as “unacceptable” by your professor.

To what do you attribute this failure?

a) to yourself, e.g. your own incompetence

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) to the other student, e.g. his/her incompetence

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) to the poor group performance

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

e) to the situation, e.g. a difficult task, a demanding professor

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

What do you feel?

a) disappointment not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

b) anger with oneself not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

c) anger with others not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

d) anger with professor not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

e) shame not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

other feelings: _____

Your are praised by your professor for your excellent seminar paper.

How do you behave?

- Express your gratitude and also express your regret that your work still needs improvement

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

Your are applying for an attractive assistant job which has drawn many applicants.

How do you behave?

- Act highly self-confidently and point out your excellent qualification.

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

Assuming a friend of you carelessly drives his/her bike into you.

How do you behave?

- a) remain calm, consider the situation objectively, and don't get angry

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- b) express anger openly and dispute with the friend

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- d) suppress the anger and avoid disputes

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

Assuming a student you don't know carelessly drives his/her bike into you.

How do you behave?

- a) remain calm, consider the situation objectively, and don't get angry

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- b) express anger openly and dispute with him/her

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

- d) suppress the anger and avoid disputes

not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ most likely

Other reactions: _____

^^^^^^